

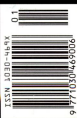
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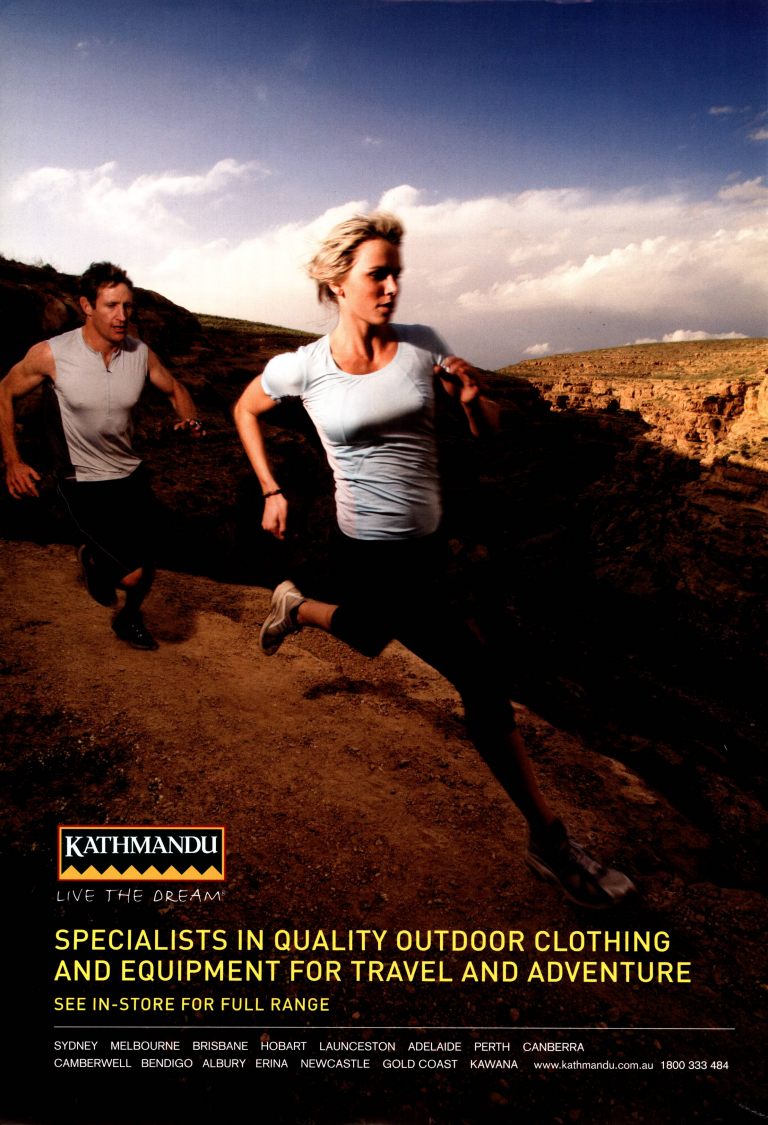
AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE



Summer (Jan-Mar) 2008, no 107 \$7.99* incl GST www.wild.com.au

Across the Bogong High Plains ■ Tibet's holy Mt Kailash
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Paddling the Noosa River ■ Rucksack and water filter surveys
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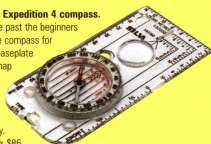
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Departments

5 Editorial

It's not all about the election...We announce the winner of the prestigious 2007 Wild Environmentalist of the Year

7 Wildfire

Letters to the Editor

15 Info

Including event coverage of the Great Australian Bushwalk, Australian Rogaining Championships and Sydney Trailwalker; new camping regulations for the Budawangs; ski season round-up; and an obituary of Clem Lindenmayer

27 The Wild Life

Quentin Chester ponders the management, borders, bureaucracy, beauty, species and wishful thinking that make up a national park

35 Folio

Scott Haskins captures the diversity of colours and textures in Tasmania's wilderness

56 Track Notes

Gorgeous gorges of the Bungonia region, by John Wilde

61 Green Pages

A profile of Wild's Environmentalist of the Year, updates on the pulp mill debacle and Bob Brown's Wielangta case, legal settlement halts NSW red-gum logging, fire management in Victoria, and more

71 Gear Survey 1

Zac Zaharias checks out rucksacks in search of the perfect bushwalking partner

77 Gear Survey 2

Drinking it in: water filters and purifiers, by Michael Hampton

81 Equipment

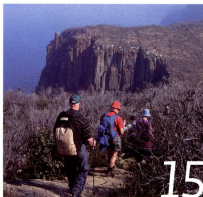
Including assistance for the short of breath, a three-in-one GPS, tents, maps and fabric

85 Reviews

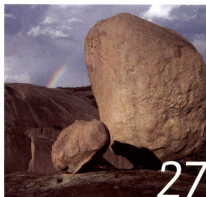
Including *Endangered*, a photographic coffee-table book that packs a political punch

88 Wild Shot

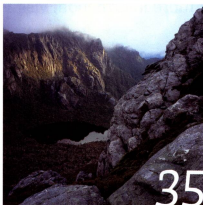
'Can I change my mind?' Second thoughts, mid-jump, in Kakadu National Park



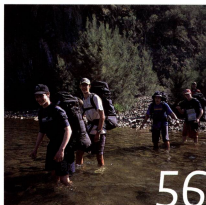
15



27



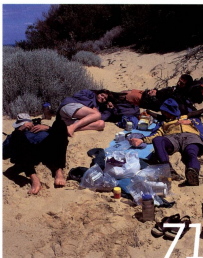
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56



61



71

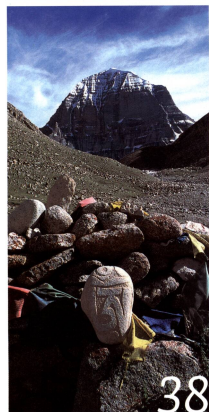


77

Features

30 **High Plains Drifting**

Glenn van der Knijff describes a west to east crossing of Victoria's Bogong High Plains, walking from Freeburgh to Anglers Rest

38 **A Holy Circuit of Tibet's Mt Kailash**

On a three-day Kora around the 'Precious Jewel' treasured by four religions, Lyndon Giffard meets pilgrims, the establishment, and an amazing mountain

42 **The Wildest Country**

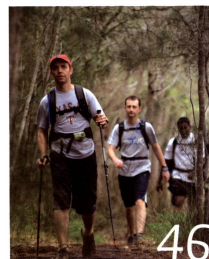
Martin Hawes explores the mysterious untracked wilderness of South-west Tasmania

46 **An Eventful Adventure**

A triptych of Australian adventure events: the 48-hour Trailwalker, the mighty Murray Marathon and the diversity of rogaining

50 **Happy New Year: Paddling the Noosa River**

Sally Goullet exchanges the usual New Year's Eve chaos and crowds for the calm of Queensland's Coolool National Park



Wild
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Established 1981

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Cover a photographer perched to capture the glowing dawn sky over the Gordon catchment, Tasmania. Martin Hawes

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It's not **all** about the election...

Changing the world, one small bikkie at a time

BY THE TIME THIS MAGAZINE HITS THE SHELVES, the whole election spectacular will be over, and we may or may not have a new government. The newspapers will be back to their usual coverage, the world's most annoying ads will have disappeared from television, and no one will be promising anything, or throwing money around. Or maybe they will. Maybe once the campaign is over the real work will begin, with 'agreements' and 'targets' transforming into real action: into broad water- and energy-efficiency measures; serious investments in renewable energy and a plan to phase out coal; public transport overhauls; an end to native-forest logging; and a serious examination of government subsidies for big industry. I'll be voting and hoping for a change in direction, for a response that matches the challenges we face and embraces the opportunities that could be created. But it's a lot to hope for in only two months...

Just in case, we've been hedging our bets and keeping busy with things over which we do have some control. In September, Wild was one of a number of outdoors businesses that signed up to a tailored program to reduce their environmental impacts, run through Grow Me The Money (GMTM). This free program helps Victorian businesses to reduce their impact on the environment; through this, we'll soon have an action plan to reduce our energy and water use, and our waste production.

Relying as it does on the natural world and the existence of 'wilderness' (all skirmishes about semantics aside), those in the 'outdoors industry' should have a particular interest in taking action to reduce environmental damage. Without a healthy natural environment, the industry—not to mention the world—will not be in a healthy state in years to come. As we make our living from promoting the wonders of the wilds, we also have a responsibility to help to protect them. And it makes good business sense too: reducing consumption not only lessens impacts, but shrinks bills as well.

This sense of the potential for motivated, engaged outdoors businesses to guide the industry towards positive change led to a Melbourne-based pilot program to 'green the outdoors industry', which culminated in a meeting organised by Future Sustainability Leaders and GMTM in September. Representatives from 15 individual businesses attended, including the Snowgum shops, Victorian Outdoor Education Association, Cliffhanger, The Wilderness Shop, Anso Trading and, of course, Wild Publications. Another 12 businesses were interested but, due to reasons including childbirth and holidays, were unable to come on the day. (Such are the facts of small business...) In fact, of those businesses contacted, only a handful weren't interested, and there were a few who were already well down their own path.

One such shining example is One Planet, the Melbourne manufacturer of packs and sleeping

bags. With little fuss or hoo ha, the company achieved carbon neutrality last year, after successfully embedding sustainability into its business from the top down. With rejigged lighting and machines, a worm farm munching through lunch scraps, excellent recycling facilities, and a strong educational focus—oh, and an interest going back a decade, plus a fair amount of cash—they've reduced their carbon footprint to zero. In fact, the company offsets not only the emissions from business travel, but also those from every employee getting to and from work, calculated to the day, and the kilometre!

Compared to that, our changes look like small bikkies. Removing one bulb from each incandescent light fitting, turning off sign illumination at night, moving towards electronic filing to reduce paper use and printing—none of these are sexy, or earth-shattering. But embedded in every big step are many little ones, and sometimes it's these that can make the greatest difference.

Of course, the need for change is not just restricted to one industry. In every home and office, there's a lot more that easily could be done, and you have the power to drive this change. There is an overwhelming amount of information out there, but if you need a place to start, please visit the news page of our web site (www.wild.com.au) where you'll find a list of easy-to-do steps for work and home, and interesting, relevant links. Although the challenges we face sound incredibly frightening, they hide many potential rewards. Through embracing change, adopting new technologies, and encouraging innovation, we could be heading for a better, more equitable, more sustainable future. 

Megan Holbeck
editorial@wild.com.au

Wild Environmentalist of the Year

We are very pleased to award the 2007 Wild Environmentalist of the Year to Maria Mann, who has worked tirelessly for Western Australia's Environ Kimberley for the last 11 years. During this time Maria has played an integral part in the organisation's campaigns, including its longest-running, which saved the Fitzroy River as a free-flowing waterway. A profile of this inspirational woman can be found on page 67.

The prestigious \$1000 award recognises an individual who has made a commitment to the environment beyond that required. We look forward to presenting the award to Maria, and give her our thanks and congratulations.

We're also very pleased to welcome the latest Wild staff member, Henry Jonah Hamilton. A very little man with a lot of hair, Henry is the first Wild baby, probably ever! The Hamiltons are coping well (although mushy, gooey and overawed with parenthood) and will be introducing HJ to the Australian bush before Christmas. All I can say is, he'd better like it!

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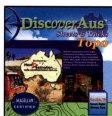
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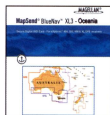


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Maximising our (not for) profits?

Four-figure fees for clubs as 'commercial operators'

CLUBS AND OTHER NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS that use New South Wales national parks should acquaint themselves with the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), Commercial Activity Licensing Review Discussion Paper of June 2007. It can be found at: www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/npws.nsf/Content/commercial.tour.licensing.review

I am very disappointed in the definition of a 'commercial operator' that the review... adopted. I realise that there are some Clayton's not-for-profit organisations out there, but I find it difficult to accept that a genuine, not-for-profit organisation such as a bushwalking or cross-country ski club is deemed to be a 'commercial operator'... undertaking ongoing commercial operations if they recompense a club member's direct and indirect expenses for leading or guiding an activity. A commercial operator... will require a licence to 'operate' in a park. Licence fees are not nominal: for an average club they can add up to a four-figure amount...

It would appear that the only rationale for this classification of not-for-profit bodies is to satisfy the complaints of registered commercial operators who see the clubs as taking business from them. In many cases, clubs are actually 'feeders' to the local commercial operators. Either way, the policies may force members to discontinue club membership, resulting in an overall loss of park patronage and... participants...

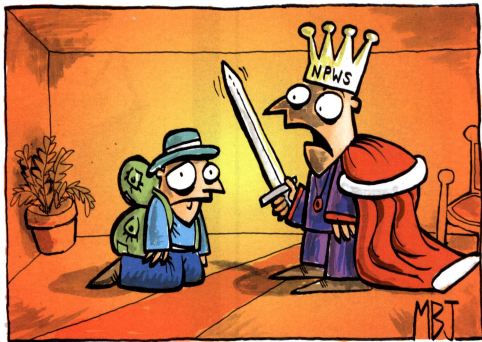
The primary purpose of a commercial operation is to be or become a profitable enterprise. The primary purpose of genuine not-for-profit clubs is totally dissociated from profit and enterprise. Guides and leaders... are generally paid or compensated merely to recompense them for their costs and the base rate of... earnings they would have received had they not volunteered to lead a club activity. A NPWS official explained to me that the actual purpose of costed licensing is to ensure that commercial operators repay the NSW Government for the use of a NSW-Government owned and maintained facility from their profits. What part of not-for-profit don't they understand?

My other concern is that it would seem impossible for the NPWS to police the licensing policy and apply equal treatment to all 'commercial operations' being conducted in National Parks.

Warren Feakes
Member of Canberra Cross-Country Ski Club
Wanniassa, ACT

Discovered: constructions in wilderness

With regard to the ongoing review of IUCN categories and the use of the term 'wilderness' (see Green Pages in *Wild* no 106), this is not merely a question of semantics and there are a couple of points that need to be challenged. The term 'wilderness' is a social construct, and



"I dub thee 'Commercial Operator'..."

most academics agree that the landscapes we usually identify as wilderness are cultural as well as natural landscapes. By restricting people's access to them, their cultural significance is ignored. If a landscape doesn't have cultural significance, there is reduced impetus for its protection from all levels of society.

The term is inappropriate to many Australian Aboriginal cultures. To Westerners, wilderness is summed up in the malapropism 'where the hand of man has not set foot', but to indigenous people it is country to which access is restricted or not allowed and where cultural obligations of care are negated. This hampers the process of reconciliation and social justice, and denies the benefits of traditional land-management practices.

Passive management results in a decline in conservation values in parks and protected areas (Baker, Woenne-Green and the Mutitjulu Community 1993). Retaining and promoting biodiversity must rely on human intervention sometimes; for example, the eradication of feral animals and plants and the re-establishment of native animal populations. The Australian continent reflects 40 000 years of indigenous land-management practices that have shaped and determined biodiversity. To their credit, public and some private land managers are beginning to incorporate those traditional practices.

I am not advocating 'open slather' access to areas set aside for conservation, but the reality is that these landscapes our governments carve out and designate as being specially deserving are the traditional homes of not only animals and plants, but people. Denying access to one

in favour of the others denies all of us the benefits of true biodiversity.

Leah Knapp
Hilton, WA

Faster, longer and harder = good gear?

Your recent trekking poles survey (*Wild* no 105) with a picture of a walker using poles in Patagonia awakened my concerns for their use in wild places.

I first saw these poles used extensively in Patagonia. In the four weeks of walking I enjoyed there, a large numbers of Europeans and North Americans rushed by me, poles flying. Yes, they travelled further and faster, carried bigger packs, and had less wobbly knees at the end of the day. I also noticed that they totally chewed up the sides of the walking tracks, dislodging gravel and rocks and small, struggling ground-cover plants...The myriad holes perfectly loosened the track sides ready for removal in the next downpour or pole attack. These folk had the proficient cadence described in your magazine; however, their rhythmically placed poles landed indiscriminately on anything and everything.

Sensitive walkers place their feet to avoid fragile plants and track-side collapse, minimising impact. Not so the pole walkers, who charges forward oblivious to the damage their poles cause. Your article did note that some poles have 'environmentally friendly' rubber tips. What a joke! These are very small relative to the load applied and do close to the same damage.

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My outdoors adventures are currently largely limited to kayaking and sailing, and I wonder what walking poles are doing to the wild places that I once enjoyed in south-east Australia. I wonder what managers of those parks are experiencing and doing?

I would think walking poles need to be discouraged by *Wild* magazine rather than promoted, and the destruction they cause highlighted. Do we really have to go faster, longer and harder at the expense of the places we enjoy?

Garry Scott
Mullumbimby, NSW

I have a Garmin Etrex GPS that I recently took on a snowshoe trip in the mountains. On a cold, slightly snowy day with poor visibility due to low cloud, the instrument informed me that the satellite signals were too weak for it to navigate. This was despite being high on Mt Twynam with only the hilly topography affecting the horizon to a limited extent. Was it the snow cloud that weakened the signals? Would an instrument with a better antenna be the answer, or do I just rely entirely on map and compass in future? Has anyone else experienced this problem? Certainly a GPS is not worth carrying if it is going to fail just when it's needed most.

John I'Ons
Kambah, ACT

I have just spent close to \$200 on a new MSR WhisperLite Multifuel Stove and was initially thoroughly unsatisfied. Using the stove for camping in China and Tibet, the same fuels were not always available. When changing fuels I have had to change jets, and when doing so I have also been cleaning the stove. When the fuels are changed—for example, from diesel to unleaded, which is about all that is available—there are always teething problems at ignition.

In attempting to solve the problem I have pulled the stove apart...and cleaned and checked every orifice that could have possibly been blocked. When removing the valve-control pin, the metal thread on the pin rubs against the inner-casing threads which are plastic. The plastic threads then tear and all fuel control is lost and the fuel valve rendered useless. Metal on plastic doesn't bounce.

Luckily I was coming into town and the shop from where I bought the stove...happily replaced the part (through the post)...and now I can control the fuel flow again—until I clean it.

The stove now works very well, even at altitudes of above 2500 metres. Sometimes the fuel valve squeaks a little when I use it, but I'm afraid to take it out again.

I was lucky I was headed to town, though. What good is a warranty if you're in the middle of the scrub?

Patrick Barrow
Transiting China

Gurus and guides

I have never met or spoken to Chris Baxter, but through many years of borrowing *Wild*, then buying and subscribing to it (and *Rock* in my more energetic days), I have developed a very strong sense of the man through his Editorials and feature articles. It's also been fascinating to watch him, through print, go from a raw

youth to middle age. I admire his courage in embarking with colleagues to set up a magazine about something he was active in and passionate about.

I felt so sad when I first read of his illness: it was more like hearing about a relative than the Editor of a magazine I buy. I think that is because my opinion, formed over the years, is of this man having values, integrity, and doing his thing for the right reasons.

Thank you for having Quentin Chester write such a fine article on Chris, and Sue (obviously the woman behind the man). Apart from being great reading, it also confirmed what I had come to appreciate about him.

The world needs more people like Chris Baxter. I wish him a complete recovery so as to continue his adventurous life for many more years.

Bernard Hibbard
Stanwell Park, NSW

First off I would like to say I really enjoy your magazine. I have found it to be full of interesting articles, many very useful especially when you review various products. Indeed the boots, sleeping bags and now sleeping mats surveys have arrived just as I am about to buy new ones—great timing.

Regarding the New Zealand WildGUIDE (*Wild* no 106), why doesn't the Heaphy Track get a mention—I thought it was a classic walk? I have done it and found it to be very good. Just a query; the guides are great.

Jerry Bliss
Tweed Heads, NSW

When is a mountain not a mountain? When it's a collection of points!

I enjoyed the article on the chap who only has one 'mountain' to climb in order to have climbed all of Tasmania's 'mountains' (see *Info* in *Wild* no 106). The obvious question arose, which was not dealt with: what constitutes a 'mountain'? The Internet...rightly or wrongly, informs me that a protrusion of over 305 metres is regarded as such. Is this the definition for your subject?

David Lardner
Garran, ACT

The Hobart Walking Club is official custodian of the list, but it is shared widely throughout the bushwalking community. It's been compiled and revised by the same group of blokes since the 1960s, I think...The list is arbitrary and height is not the only criterion for selection and point allocation. For example, Mt Daedalus on Schouten Island is only 400 metres, but it's a terrific little peak and takes some effort to bag. Points are allocated on the basis of difficulty, remoteness and, to a certain extent, proximity to others. Some point allocations are historical; for example, Federation Peak has always received the maximum of ten points even though it is relatively easy now. The current edition dates from early this century and there are a few additions and subtractions from the previous edition, which is on the web at www.wildtiger.biz/upfiles/wt_articles/174464822.PeakBaggingList.pdf...There's only one rule: you have to summit. Near enough is

not good enough. Peak baggers tend to talk in points rather than number of peaks, so Dave would be on 880 points. Very few have more than 800.

John McLaine
Launceston, Tas

Message to marketers: mass destruction not a tourist drawcard

Wild readers will no doubt be in the marketers' sights for the proposed Three Capes Walk in Tasmania, should it go ahead. It seems ironic that the Tasmanian Premier and Tourism Minister recently went to the area espousing the marvels of the place and how they intend to invest an estimated \$15 million to create a Three



Not a pretty sight: the start of the old Cape Pillar Track now. **Top**, an earlier photo with a sign telling of the track's relocation, the clear-fell obvious behind. Both photos Peter Franklin

Capes walk to attract ecotourists. While all this has been going on, the government has been responsible for the wholesale destruction of the land bordering the proposal.

One of the walk's prime locations is the spectacular Cape Pillar in the Tasman National Park (see article on the area in *Wild* no 106). Over a period of more than 30 years I have regularly walked there, but not so long ago the start of the track was moved a short distance from state forest land into the national park. It is very sad to see the terrible wound that has been recently inflicted on the original track, in the



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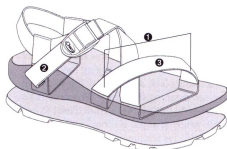
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form of massive clear-felling of the forest. Clearly the forest industry has no heart and soul.

Why is it that politicians cannot see that this is equivalent to shooting yourself in the foot? The mass destruction of forests is not something that rates highly as an attraction to tourists.

Peter Franklin
Lenah Valley, Tas

Fuss, fees, and respect

I just don't understand what all the fuss is over regarding national park fees. Surely the people who complain about having to pay a seemingly small amount to enter our national parks must keep their eyes fixed on the road...because you don't have to be a rocket scientist to appreciate the absolute beauty and magnitude of the wilderness.

When walking in the Central Highlands of Tasmania you are taken by the magnificence of your surrounds and the natural scenery. My praise goes out to the Parks & Wildlife Department for providing extremely eco-friendly, subtle, good quality tracks, campsites, huts and toilets that don't take away from the landscape.

In closing I would like to thank the team at Wild for a tremendous magazine that covers the important issues and sheds light on topics that we all love to hear about. Your expedition articles keep us hanging in there through the working week until we can head off on an adventure ourselves.

Andrew Blake
Smithton, Tas

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From 20–24 August this year two friends and I completed the Hinchinbrook Track. Along the way we met some great people, including a large group from a Brisbane bushwalking club. These people were truly lovely, with varied levels of fitness and experience.

This aside, I feel this group acted as a bad representative for bushwalking clubs and walkers in general. A smaller group of three broke away...on the first day and went 'bush bashing' up the large mountain there. When I asked one about the permit...he just shrugged his shoulders and smiled, saying he didn't have one or need one. Excellent work protecting our environment.

Not wanting to put my ill will on the rest of the group because of a few, we continued our walk and came across them on a number of occasions. On their second-last night they camped at Sunken Reef Bay, the next day telling us that they lit fires on the beach and burnt driftwood. I don't know, but I am assuming that fires are banned there given the fact you have to take in stores...

These people were very nice overall, but their lack of respect for the bush, the national parks people, and fellow walkers I find more than a little disappointing. It only takes one mistake and so much damage could be caused.

Liz Marsden
Seaford, Vic

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au



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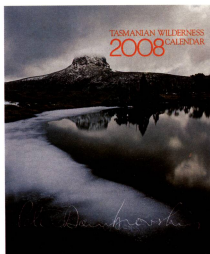
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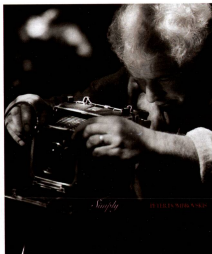
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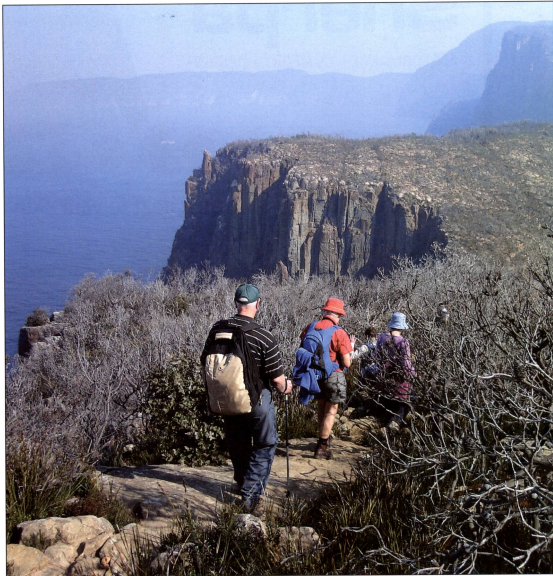
Great Australian Bushwalk

Andrew Cox reports on the big day and its origins

Australians took to bushwalking en masse on 9 September this year, when more than 2600 people joined the fifth annual Great Australian Bushwalk (GAB). It was bigger and more extensive than ever and provided a great way for those who don't regularly bushwalk to experience its benefits. On offer were 120 guided bushwalks—all free—in bushland surrounding every capital city in Australia, and many other locations. On the day a great many creatures were spotted, including a platypus at the Mt Field waterfalls walk in Tasmania. At Narooma, walkers sighted two red-bellied black snakes, a pod of dolphins, a diamond python and a casuarina that was like a giant cubby house inside.

The GAB is the only national event that helps new people to try bushwalking, spreading the word into the wider community. To paraphrase the event's ambassador, Tim Macartney-Snape, if more people went bushwalking regularly, our society would be much happier, better informed and healthier. The GAB was first held in 2003, and was started by the independent National Parks Associations (NPAs) as a way to attract new people to bushwalking and promote their year-round non-profit bushwalking programs.

As the NPAs are also conservation groups, the event focuses on creating greater community awareness of the beauty of our natural environment and why it needs our protection. The NPAs aim to limit the negative impacts of bushwalking, so strongly promote



Walkers explore Cape Hauy on the Tasman Peninsula, Tasmania. *Christine Corbett* **Left**, the Great Australian Bushwalk attracts all types, as can be seen from this photo taken in Victoria's Lysterfield Park. *Barney Dyer*



the seven principles of Leave No Trace (www.lnt.org.au) throughout the event.

The next GAB will be on Sunday 14 September 2008. But you don't have to wait until then: the event's organisers run similar guided bushwalks for beginners and occasional bushwalkers all year round. For more information, visit the event's web site at www.greataustralianbushwalk.org.au or telephone the information line on: (02) 9299 0000.

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Budawangs camping: new regulations in force

Roger Lembit outlines the new conditions of use

The New South Wales National Parks & Wildlife Service (NSW NPWS) has announced new regulations for walking and camping in the Budawang wilderness, following the completion of the Budawangs Walking & Camping Strategy. The regulations came into force on 1 September 2007. The Budawangs area, in Morton National Park, is recognised as the most popular area for walking in NSW. With this popularity comes pressure on the natural features that make the area so attractive. The Budawangs are also significant for Aboriginal cultural heritage, with use of the caves for shelter dating back thousands of years. The new NPWS regulations recognise the conflict between recreational uses and natural and cultural heritage values. The requirements have been developed after consultation with user groups including bushwalking clubs, and after some heated debates about the nature of the controls.

A number of popular campsites have been declared fuel-stove-only areas: Monolith Valley, Castle Saddle, Hidden Valley, The Vines rainforest, Two Rivers Track south of Little Forest, all caves and overhangs, Bibbenluke, Cooyoyo Creek, Styles Plain, Burrumbeet Brook and Canowie Brook. Walkers are encouraged to use fuel stoves at all other campsites. From 2008 permits will be required to camp at the popular Cooyoyo Creek area at Easter and over the October long weekend. It is likely that permit requirements will be extended to other areas in the future. There will be a limit on the number of tents allowed at some of the most popular camping sites. Camping in camp caves (overhangs) will only be permitted at designated caves.

The Tianjara Plateau in the north-east of the Budawangs was formerly used as an artillery range by the army. Camping within this area is restricted to two sites and walkers are required to stick to vehicle tracks or the Folly Point walking track. The artillery-impact area covers a surprisingly large area including sections of the upper Clyde River. It is likely that unexploded ordnances are still present, with the risk of explosion if disturbed. There is no requirement to carry a metal detector.

The Walking & Camping Strategy includes vague commitments to a monitoring program, including the possibility that walking clubs could assist in monitoring track and campsite degradation. Further information on the new requirements are available from www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/budawangs.brochure.pdf

Clem Lindenmayer

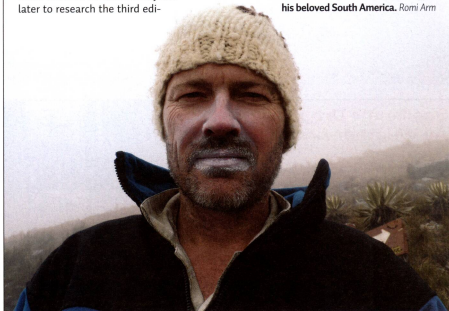
Nick Tapp bids farewell to a friend and guidebook guru

Australian walking-guidebook writer Clem Lindenmayer has died, apparently of natural causes, while trekking in western China. Lindenmayer contributed to numerous Lonely Planet guidebooks and will be best remembered by walkers for two that were all his own work—*Trekking in the Patagonian Andes* and *Walking in Switzerland*—and for *Hiking in the Rocky Mountains*. Readers found in these books not only an amazing quantity of information, but also inspiration. At times, the books quite literally broke new ground. In the second edition of *Trekking in the Patagonian Andes*, Lindenmayer described a circuit through wild, trackless terrain on the island of Tierra del Fuego and assigned provisional names to several passes and lakes. When he returned a few years later to research the third edi-

tion, those names had been given official status on revised government maps of the area and, in addition, Cerro Clem and the Montes Lindenmayer were named in his honour. Many of the trekkers who carried his book (or a pirated photocopy of it) considered him almost a personal friend. That kind of loyalty is not gained lightly.

Lindenmayer's passion for languages helped to fuel his travel habit. He was in China to brush up on his Mandarin when he embarked on a trek around Minya Konka (aka Gongga Shan) in early May. When he failed to return as planned, family members travelled to the area and organised a search. In July, Lindenmayer's wife Romi and a party of searchers found his body on a mountain-side and arranged a cremation in the Tibetan manner. He will be missed by many.

Clem Lindenmayer mountaineering in his beloved South America. Romi Arm



Gasherbrum I

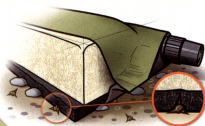
The second Australian ascent

In July Mick Parker became the second Australian to climb Gasherbrum I, without oxygen, after Andrew Lock. Gasherbrum I, also known as Hidden Peak, is located in Pakistan's Karakoram region, and is the 11th highest mountain in the world at 8068 metres. Parker continued up the peak after the rest of the Army Alpine Association group turned around because of bad

weather and conditions. He headed up alone, getting to within 300 metres of the summit before dropping his ice axe—the strap somehow slid off his wrist. However, within a short time he returned, replacement axe in hand, and climbed all the way to the summit in dangerous conditions, reaching the top on 29 July. Parker climbed the route alpine style. It is his third 8000 metre peak after Cho Oyu (8201 metres) and Broad Peak (8047 metres), all climbed without oxygen.

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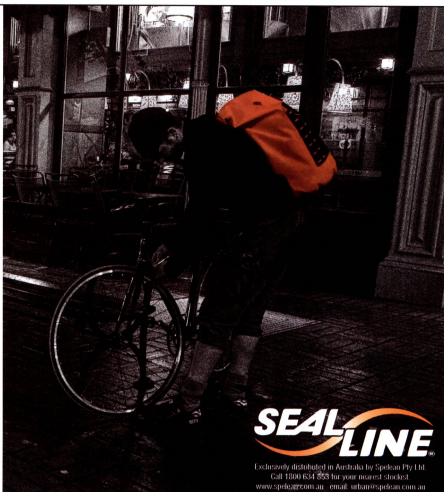
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National Parks: profit or conservation?

Geoff Mosley examines the government's new 'Natural Tourism Action Plan'

One of the great things about our national parks is that they are first and foremost community assets dedicated to the long-term conservation of nature. In a world increasingly beset by commercially driven developments aimed at meeting short-term needs, they send out a strong message that the environment deserves respect, and that when it comes to the increasing demands we are making on the environment 'enough is enough'. Unfortunately, there are always those who would like to get access to the parks for resources or other commercial opportunities, and the tourist industry is no exception.

A new plan launched in July 2007 appears to signal the beginning of a wider raid by private tourist interests on the national park estate. This is the beguilingly named 'Natural Tourism Action Plan', an Australian Government funded initiative by the Tourism & Transport Forum. The media interpretation of the Action Plan, and a media release by the Federal Tourism Minister, is that it signals a drive to develop more privately-owned tourist facilities in national parks. I believe that any fair-minded person will recognise that that is exactly what it is about. An exception is made for nature reserves and wilderness areas, but all other categories are regarded as fair game. (Of course, with wilderness areas there is always the possibility that this obstacle could be removed, as happened in 2007 to the 21-year-old wilderness zone [zone four] in Kakadu National Park.)

Various methods for private developments in parks or on the edge of parks are canvassed in the Action Plan, such as land-swap leases. It is evident from the press release that the Minister has the precedent of a recent development of a six-star resort in the Wolgan Valley (Wollemi National Park) by the Emirates company very much in mind. (See Green Pages in Wild no 106.)

The Managing Director of the Plan, Christopher Brown, states that it was developed in close consultation with 'the tourism industry, park managers and conservation groups'. In fact, not a single National Parks Association or representative is listed as being involved. Instead, reliance is placed on endorsements from the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Australia-New Zealand Section of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas. (I am a member of both bodies but the first I knew of this was when I opened the plan.)

The main justification for this so-called partnership is that the public sector cannot afford to conserve and develop the national parks, so why not let the industry give a helping hand. It is a convenient argument, but the bottom line is that we should provide adequate funding for our parks and protect them against the management distortions of vested short-term interests.

National cross-country ski team news



Finn Marsland wraps up the season

The snow was good in 2007, with great training and racing conditions all winter. There were a lot of very tight competitions at club, state and national level, and seven different athletes took victories in the 12 open-class national selection events. Paul Murray from Victoria's Mt Beauty and KT Calder from Canberra won the overall Australia-New Zealand Continental Cup series. The Kangaroo Hoppet had to be moved to two laps due to a short stretch lacking snow; however, there was nearly one metre of cover over the rest of the course. Thomas Freimuth (Germany) and KT Calder won the 42 kilometre men's and women's open events on a hard and fast track, with Ben Sim from Cooma the first Australian male home. The 21 kilometre Australian Birkebeiner was won by Alex Almoukov and Aimee Watson, while the seven kilometre Joey Hoppet event was won by Mark Pollock and Georgia Merritt.

The main competitions for this coming season are the World Junior and Under-23 Championships in Szczyrk in Poland and a selection of World Cup and Continental Cup events, mostly in Europe. One of the goals this season is to qualify more of our junior and Continental Cup athletes for the World Cup, so that we have a large team to choose



Kangaroo Hoppet competitors on the first lap of the Sun Valley loop. Top, Ben Sim, overall runner-up and first Australian home, is chased by a group of skiers near Rocky Valley Lake. Both photos Juliet Morris

from for the 2009 World Championships in the Czech Republic.

More cross-country skiing news and results can be seen at the Australian Cross Country Skiing web site www.hoppet.com.au/xc



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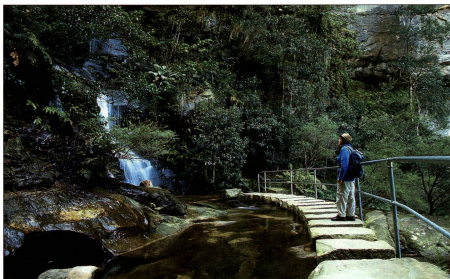
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Historical track reopened

Kay Gordon outlines renovations to the National Pass track

National Pass is not only one of the oldest walking tracks in the Blue Mountains; it is one of the most popular. Renowned for its panoramic views, spectacular waterfalls and a diversity of plants, including some rare and endangered species, its historic and aesthetic significance led to its inclusion on the State Heritage Register. However, its popularity has also caused problems. Overuse during the last century caused the track to deteriorate, raising concerns about public safety. In 2002 National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) closed the National Pass walking track at Wentworth Falls in the Blue Mountains for urgent maintenance. Expected to take about 12 months, the walking track was reopened in 2007, five years after reconstruction began. Sandstone blocks have been strategically placed across creek crossings, new bridges have been constructed, timber boardwalks enable walkers



New handrails and sandstone blocks below Sylvia Falls. Kay Gordon

to negotiate damp areas, especially areas under the drip line and Den Fenella Falls, and new fencing and handrails make the track much safer than previously.

What else needs to be done? 'Once National Pass is reopened other tracks in the Wentworth Falls area will be systematically closed for maintenance,' a NPWS field officer said. 'It's part of

a long-term project to upgrade the walking tracks and the parking area at Wentworth Falls.'

Walking near Wentworth Falls?

Check the NPWS web site, ring the Blue Mountains Heritage Centre on (02) 4787 8877, or check the information boards at Wentworth Falls as access to some tracks may be restricted.

Wild Diary

Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack-sports events open to the general public and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Pahrn, Vic 3181. Email editorial@wild.com.au

December

Paddy Pallin Adventure Race M
15 December, NSW
www.arocsport.com.au

Red Cross Murray Marathon C
27-31 December, Vic
www.redcross.org.au/vic

January 2008

Kathmandu Adventure Series M
13 January, NSW
www.maxadventure.com.au

50-hour Adventure Race M
25-28 January, NSW
www.arocsport.com.au

February

Cradle Mountain Run B BR
2 February, Tas
www.cradle-ultra200.com

Adventure Paddle C
2 February, NSW
www.maxadventure.com.au

AROC Adventure Race M
9 February, NSW
www.arocsport.com.au

Kathmandu Adventure Series M
9 February, NSW
www.maxadventure.com.au

Metrogaine 6 hr R
16 February, NT
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

Paddlogaine R
16 February, Vic
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

Paddy Pallin Adventure Race M
23 February, ACT
www.arocsport.com.au

Upside Down 8 hr R
23 February, Qld
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

Upside Down 12 hr R
23 February, WA
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

Metrogaine R
24 February, NSW
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

March

Six Foot Track Marathon BR
8 March, NSW
www.sixfoot.com/index.php

National and Oceania Flat Water Championships C
12-16 March, NSW
www.canoe.org.au

Deuter Rat Race M
15 March, ACT
www.arocsport.com.au

6/12 hr R
15 March, Vic
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

3/6 hr R
22 March, Qld
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

Lifestart Kayaks for Kids C
30 March, NSW
www.arocsport.com.au

Kathmandu Adventure Series M
30 March, NSW
www.maxadventure.com.au

April

Paddy Pallin 6 hr R
6 April, ACT
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

Lifestart: Oars for a Cause C
13 April, ACT
www.arocsport.com.au

Paddy Pallin Adventure Race M
19 April, NSW
www.arocsport.com.au

Autumn 12 hr R
19 April, WA
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

Autumn 24 hr R
19-20 April, NSW
www.arocsport.com.au

2 x 6 hr R
19-20 April, Vic
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

3/8 hr R
20 April, Qld
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

May

The North Face 100 B BR
17-18 May, NSW
www.arocsport.com.au

ACT Championships 8/24 hr R
17-18 May, ACT
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

State Championships 24 hr R
17-18 May, Qld
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

15/24 hr R
17-18 May, Vic
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

June

NT Championships 24 hr R
14-15 June, NT
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

State Championships 24 hr R
14-15 June, WA
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

Paddy Pallin 6 hr R
15 June, NSW
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

3/6/12/24 hr R
21 June, Qld
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

2 x 6 hr R
21-22 June, Vic
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

Kathmandu Adventure Series M
22 June, NSW
www.maxadventure.com.au

July

8 hr R
5 July, Qld
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

Winter 6/12 hr R
12 July, ACT
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

8 hr R
20 July, Vic
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

August

Metrogaine 5 hr R
3 August, ACT
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

Go Natural Multisport M
16 August, NSW
www.maxadventure.com.au

Australian Championships 24 hr R
16-17 August, NSW
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

Spring 24 hr R
16-17 August, WA
<http://www.vra.rogaine.asn.au>

Activities: B bushwalking, BR bush running, C canoeing, M multisports, R rogaine. Rogaining events are organised by the state rogaining associations. Canoeing events are organised by the state canoeing associations unless otherwise stated.



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Junior World Orienteering Championships

Dayle Green reports on an exciting competition

Young athletes from 29 countries gathered at Dubbo, NSW, in July for a week of competition in the 2007 Junior World Orienteering Championships. More than 200 of the world's top orienteers aged 16–20 competed in the annual event, held from 7–13 July. Securing the Championships was a major coup for Australian orienteering as it was the first time in the history of the sport that they have been held outside Europe.

Competition commenced with a sprint course through Western Plains Zoo. The Czech Republic's Vojtech Kral won gold in the men's course, while Sweden's Eva Svensson won the women's event.

The competition then moved to the Sappa Bulga Ranges 28 kilometres south of Dubbo, where spectacular granite terrain provided a mixture of open forest, paddocks and boulder-capped hillsides. Course setters made the most of the landscape by designing large spectator arenas beneath the towering granite peaks. All courses featured at least two spectator controls that allowed cheering crowds to keep track of the action.

Norway dominated the winner's podium at the long-distance event, taking out both gold and silver in the men's and women's competition. However, Australians also performed strongly on their home turf, with Simon Uphill coming fourth in the men's event and fellow South Australian Vanessa Round finishing sixth in the women's. Both Uphill and Round produced solid results all week, with Uphill coming tenth in the sprints and Round placing 15th in the middle-distance championships.

Norwegian Olav Lundanes was one of the standout performers of the week taking home four medals from four events. He claimed his second gold of the competition by winning the middle-distance crown while Sweden's Jenny Lonkvist won the women's event.

The relays provided spectators with some exciting sprint finishes. Norway snatched gold from Sweden by less than a second in the women's relay, while the Czech Republic outran the favoured Norwegians to claim gold in the men's. Organiser Nick Dent said afterwards:



Competitors (including one wearing green and gold) race out of a gully on the long-distance course.

Rob Preston

'We have clearly demonstrated to the overseas orienteering community and also to our own Australian orienteering community that we are capable of organising a world-class event that

provided quality terrain and maps, excellent courses and organisation.'

For more photos and the full results, see <http://jwoc2007.orienteering.asn.au/home/>

Australian Rogaining Championships

Results from the outback

The 2007 Australian Championships were held in the East Macdonnell Ranges, near Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, over the weekend 28–29 July. On a rugged and dry course, Joel Mackay and Philip Whitten came first overall and were also the men's open winners,

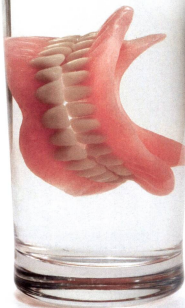
while Julie Quinn and David Baldwin came second overall and first in the open mixed. Susie Sprague and Selina Stoute won the open women's event. (See article beginning page 46 for more information about rogaining and this event.) For the full results for each category, visit <http://nt.rogaine.asn.au/events/ARC2007/ARC2007results.html>

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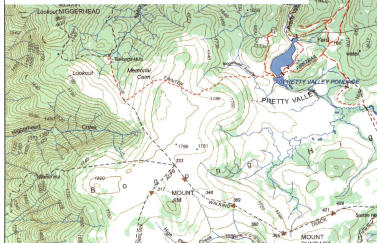
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Oxfam Trailwalker

Sydney's new track trial

The 2007 Sydney Oxfam Trailwalker was a damp affair, with the track having received the equivalent of a month's rain in one day the previous Sunday. On the morning of 24 August, just over 500 teams set off in drizzly conditions from Chowder Bay in Mosman, with local team the Sydney Striders Foreign Legion taking line honours. The team, comprising Richard Green, Jaap Baker, Joel Mackay and Jonathan Worswick, crossed the line in 12 hours, 56 minutes—following up nicely from their 2006 victory in the Melbourne Oxfam Trailwalker. The first female team home was the ACT Run Girls in 19 hours, 28 minutes, while the first mixed team home was the Gu Ru's in 14 hours, 44 minutes. Despite the wet conditions, more than 70 per cent of the participants finished, raising over two million dollars in the process. See page 46 for more information on the event. For more results from the Oxfam Trailwalker, visit www.oxfam.org.au/trailwalker

the ACT resident marathon champion, took 30 minutes off the female Bush Marathon record held by Australian representative Vanessa Haverd. Bennett clocked 3 hours, 16 minutes, 50 seconds for the 42 kilometres. Tim Sawkins was the male marathon champion in 3 hours, 8 minutes, 22 seconds. Former national junior champion Angela Bateup led a record-breaking Yass trifecta of herself, Fleur Flanery and Narelle Patrick in the 25 kilometre event. Bateup won in 1 hour, 42 minutes, 51 seconds, becoming the first female runner to better the two-hour barrier, followed closely by Flanery and Patrick. Geoff Hawke ran 1 hour, 40 minutes, 46 seconds to be fastest male. James Minto and former Australian mountain-running champion Judith May had comfortable victories in the most popular event, the 16 kilometres around Mt Ainslie and over the Majura-Ainslie ridge. Minto ran 1 hour, 4 minutes, 41 seconds, while May clocked 1 hour, 17 minutes, 10 seconds.

Many similar track-running events are held around Australia, offering a range of distances to cater for all levels of fitness. These are listed in the calendar at www.mountainrunning.coolrunning.com.au

Scroggin

Tamboritha Road access

We have been advised by Parks Victoria that there is no access past Licola on the Tamboritha Road due to flood damage. The road may not be serviceable for a year or more because of the extensive and expensive nature of the repairs needed. For up to date information, visit www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

New bogs for Bogong

Parks Victoria also tell us that new toilets were built over last summer at Michelle Hut on Mt Bogong's Eskdale Spur. The MUMC Hut on Mt Feathertop's North-west Spur also sports some new dunnies.

Back from the Brink: revised

David Noble informs us that the second edition of Andy Macqueen's *Back from the Brink: Blue Gum Forest and the Grose Wilderness* is now out. First published ten years ago, this guide is apparently still a must for any NSW bushwalker's library. Contact Andy via andymacqueen@gmail.com to get yourself a copy. RRP \$39.95. 

Corrections and amplifications

Paula Constant has walked nearly 8000 kilometres through the Sahara on three separate trips (see *Wild* no 106, page 15). In the sleeping bag survey table in *Wild* no 105, the loft for the Mont Spindrift should have been listed as 750 rather than 700.

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

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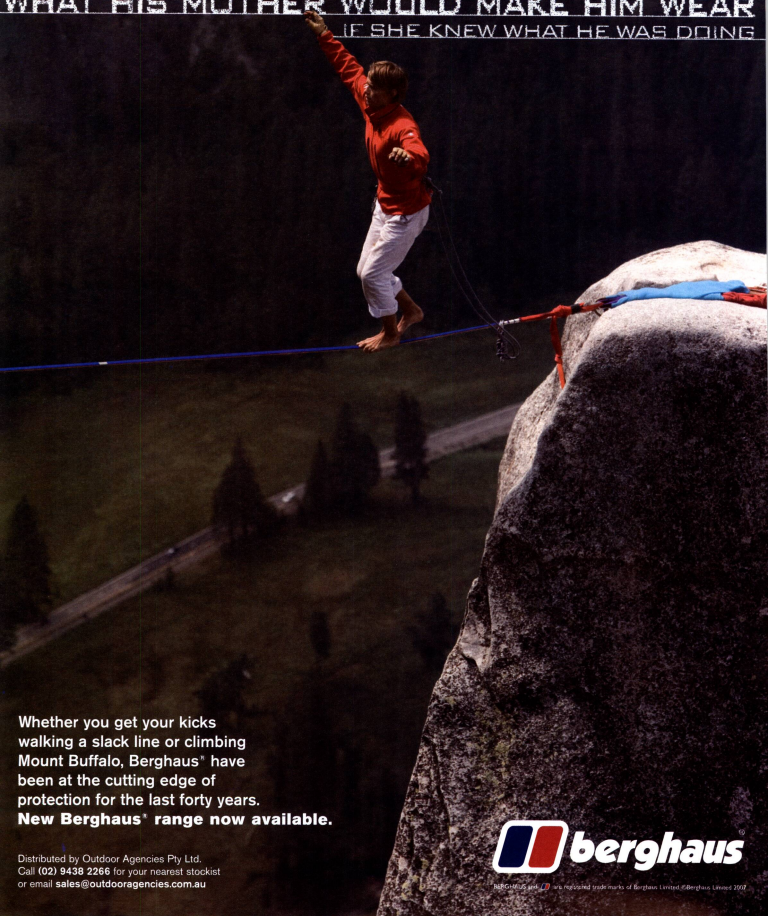
Jaggad Bush Capital Bush Marathon Festival

John Harding gives us the rundown

Canberra's Jaggad Bush Capital Bush Marathon Festival is a track-running and bushwalking event held yearly on the last Saturday of July. It starts from the centre of Canberra and passes through Mt Ainslie, Mt Majura, Gooroorayroo and Mulligans Flat Nature Reserves. There are five track-running events held over five, 16, 25, 42 and 60 kilometres, and bushwalks of 16 and 25 kilometres.

Record-breaking performances by Jackie Fairweather, Elizabeth Bennett and Angela Bateup were the highlights. Fairweather, the former world triathlon and duathlon champion, took 4 hours, 47 minutes, 13 seconds for the 60 kilometre run, slashing 32 minutes off the course record held by world rogaining champion Julie Quinn. She was second outright, only three minutes behind Australian 100 kilometre representative Tim Cochrane, who took 4 hours, 44 minutes, 12 seconds. Elizabeth Bennett,

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Parks, *present* and *future*



Quentin Chester ponders the management, borders, bureaucracy, beauty, species and wishful thinking that make up a national park

FROM THE HIGHEST POINT THE HILLS DIP AND rise in gentle folds. Apart from a few gullies thick with timber, the landscape is rolling woodland scattered with grey granite. The rocks are everywhere, in pinnacles and tors, teetering boulders and bare, rump-like slabs. To walk here is to wander a maze of sculpted stone. The essence is in the detail—a shaded waterhole, fern-filled nooks, orchids unfurling or another granite block polished by time.

This garden of delights is Queensland's Girraween National Park, wedged against the New South Wales border. Covering 12 000 hectares, it's one of those smallish, out-of-the-way parks

that get lost in the rush. Girraween is no untamed wilderness. A century of farming and logging have left their mark. It's also home to pigs, cats, foxes and more than a few weeds. Yet for all this it remains an inviting place, beloved by locals and offering an uncommon ease and intimacy with things natural. Come to think of it, humble Girraween might just be one of the more successful ventures in that branch of wishful thinking we call national parks.

A national park is an idea about a place. Through popular acclaim, a few lines on a map and some legal argy-bargy we make a parcel of land sacrosanct. In years past the view was that our governments should look after these places. That used to mean simply keeping development at bay and letting nature do its thing. There was also an assumption that people were pretty much free to visit these areas to picnic, camp, sightsee and wander about.

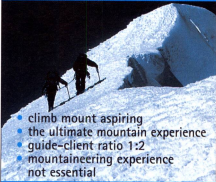
In 1966 two small parks—Bald Rock Creek and Castle Rock—were amalgamated to create Girraween, an Aboriginal word meaning 'place of flowers'. Even though it's not from the local

Girraween National Park, a garden of delights, including a Pyramid, Balancing Rock and rainbow. *Garry Schlatter*

Aboriginal language group this rebadging was a welcome innovation. You see, the district has a kind of identity crisis. The local map shows that Girraween has Bald Rock Creek and Bald Rock Creek camping area. Cross the border into NSW and you'll find Bald Rock National Park, which comprises Bald Rock, Bald Rock Gully, Bald Rock Road and Bald Rock camping area. Oh yes, up the track, but back in Queensland, sits South Bald Rock. And to the west? You guessed it; West Bald Rock. It's enough to make you tear your hair out.

Over the past 40 years we have become much better at handing out names, including an overdue recognition of the land's Aboriginal ties. This is just one measure of a major shift in how we appreciate and protect the natural world. However, not all this new thinking has been clear-sighted. In our enthusiasm we have embraced a jumble of ideas and definitions. So

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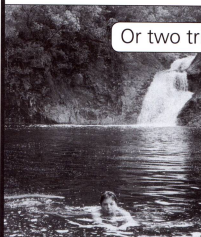
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much so that the national register of reserved lands features a bewildering list of more than 50 categories of parks and reserves.

Still, at least this is a sign that things were happening. Through the 1970s–1980s the push was on to save great tracts of country. The mention of names like Daintree, Kakadu, Fraser Island, the Franklin, the Colo and the Garmon Ranges recalls the memory of placards and pitched battles. The fight wasn't just to protect the odd pleasing patch of bush but to defend something much greater, something that was now called wilderness. Into the equation came all sorts of new concepts, including World Heritage, biosphere reserves, wilderness protection and various precursors to native title.

When the dust settled our governments were left holding some very demanding babies. It's one thing to declare parks but a much trickier exercise to manage them, especially when they are the size of a small European country. Adding to the burden was a revolution in what we wanted parks to do. No longer was it enough to fence a lookout, arrange a couple of picnic tables and build a toilet block. Now there were vast habitats to manage and many species to mollycoddle. Suddenly everyone was worried about biodiversity.

Even little Girraween was revealed to have its own avalanche of living things. Scattered amongst the rocks are more than 700 plants species, some 25 different mammals and frogs, 150 bird species and around 50 types of reptiles. It's home to a host of rare and endangered species. It's the northern outpost for common wombats and superb lyrebirds. It has its very own endemic turtle and leaf-tailed gecko. There is even a eucalypt unique to the area, the wallangarra white gum, whose stronghold is on the higher ridges of the park.

It's a familiar story repeated all over the country. Every year science reveals new threats to things we didn't know existed, in places we've never heard of. At the same time the pressure builds on our parks to be all things to all people. They have to serve as tourist drawcards with resorts, flash visitor centres and cafes. They need to become self-funding with a system of permits and payments. They are required to be safe, regulated 'environments' with access restrictions, signs and warnings. And, oh yes, we want them to be havens of natural grace in a degraded world.

Park agencies often flounder under the weight of these expectations. Meanwhile, we struggle to keep up with our obligations to habitat and species conservation. Politicians blather about biodiversity but regularly fail to fund our parks and conservation projects properly. Just ask those rabid greenies at the Commonwealth Auditor General. Their March 2007 report, *The Conservation and Protection of National Threatened Species and Ecological Communities*, documents a pitiful record of underfunding and delays. Ditto the Senate's April 2007 report, *Conserving Australia*.

Of course there are many dedicated park rangers hard at work throughout the country. But dithering ministers and a stodgy bureaucracy create the kind of inertia that bleeds the life out of park personnel. The result is a jaded mindset that reduces the role of government agencies to being nature's grumpy janitor. As one senior bureaucrat memorably put it: 'The

only things you need to know about parks are fires, fences, ferals and f**cking tourists.'

While the past decade has seen a smattering of new national parks added and others enlarged, there has been nothing like the energetic declarations that marked the 1980s. It's hard not to conclude that our beleaguered state and federal environment departments are faltering as they try to manage a growing list of duties with ever dwindling resources. You also begin to wonder whether they have been too busy chasing their tails. Take this chat I had last year while on a writing job in Queensland:

'Mate, do you have a permit?' asked the ranger. 'I'm sorry...a what?'

'A permit to write about the park.'

'No, I mean...I didn't know you needed a permit to write.'

'Afraid so, mate, that's what it says here,' he said, waving a wad of closely typed pages.

Given all the challenges confronting our parks, the notion that harassing writers should be a priority is the stuff of Orwellian farce, another sign of bureaucracy disappearing up its own cul-de-sac.

While government departments fiddle, several new players are merrily redefining habitat conservation. Over the past ten years, organisations including Australian Bush Heritage, Australian Wildlife Conservancy, Trust for Nature and Birds Australia, as well as smaller outfits like Australia Zoo and Earth Sanctuaries, have bought up big chunks of real estate. Together they now control around 2 000 000 hectares of significant habitat scattered across the country. Welcome to the new age of ecological empires.

These enterprises add a welcome dash of diversity to the conservation effort. They bring new ideas and private investment, not to mention a small army of willing volunteers ready to pull weeds and fix fences. In theory, private reserves complement our public parks by securing biological riches in areas where national parks are not feasible or merited. That seems fair enough if we're talking about clapped out grazing properties. However, the distinction is not always so clear.

The western boundary of Girraween National Park is deeply indented. On the map it looks as though a big tooth is missing. This is a 160 hectare property owned by the shareholders of Girraween Environmental Lodge. It's a pleasing parcel of bush ringed by granite formations and walking tracks. Nestled among the rocks and trees are ten roomy cabins, offering some of the smartest bush accommodation anywhere in the land. The lodge is well run. The bush is cared for. Yet there is a nagging question. Why isn't this place a part of Girraween National Park?

Head north-west for 700 kilometres and you arrive at Carnarvon National Park and a similar story. Next door to the Mt Moffat section of the park sits Carnarvon Station, 59 000 hectares of grassy woodland, sandstone bluffs and steep ridges at the headwaters of the Warrego River. In 2001 Carnarvon Station was snapped up by Bush Heritage Australia, who have set to work rehabilitating the former cattle property. It's a powerhouse of a place, rich in natural treasures. All credit to the Bush Heritage mob—but here again, it's hard to fathom the philosophy, the logic and the hard science that would deny its place in the body of Carnarvon National Park.

Then again, the truth is our parks have always been a bit arbitrary. Typically they were cobbled together from rough country for which no one had much use. More by accident than design we preserved the steepest peaks and deepest gorges, the ground that was lousy for farming and rocky 'badlands' like Girraween that could never be cleared. Not surprisingly, we don't have parks that preserve large swathes of fertile native grassland.

As dramatic as it can be, most of our parks are diabolical places to access and manage, especially in the hands-on way that is now required. Not only that but a lot of them have grown unchecked. Seventy years ago Carnarvon National Park covered 23 000 hectares. It's now a many headed monster sprawling across 298 000 tortuous hectares of sandstone gorges and tablelands. Kakadu National Park is no less rugged and nearly twice the size. Even though it benefits from Commonwealth funding, it remains a major test of how we cut it as World Heritage custodians.

Kakadu is justly celebrated as one of the shiniest jewels in the crown. But you don't have to look too deep to realise this status is as much due to chance as to intrinsic merit. Kakadu's eastern border, a gun barrel north–south line across the plateau, is a political demarcation. Much of the immense expanse of Arnhem Land to the east is equally deserving of recognition for its biological marvels, cultural significance and conservation value.

Head back west across the border into Western Australia and you find an even more compelling story in the Kimberley's vast sweep of ragged coastline and plateau hinterland. It's a landscape five times the size of Kakadu and a realm with the potential to eclipse anything else we have put up for World Heritage listing. Unless you consider the Great Victoria Desert or Cape York or...

That's the problem with thinking about parks in Australia. Once you get rolling it's hard to stop. Such speculation puts the heat on our rationale for reserved lands and how we make these ideas work on the ground. The focus on biodiversity and reconnecting our fractured habitats is critical. Private reserves will play a big part in that process. But to let national parks continue to slide would be a mistake. They should always be the best and brightest examples of how we respect and connect with the natural world.

Girraween National Park belongs to no one yet it belongs to us all. You don't need to be a member of anything or own shares to visit—and it being Queensland you don't even have to pay an entry fee. You are free to picnic, bushwalk, hug the granite or look for turtles in the waterholes. It's not the grandest park in the world. There are no crashing waterfalls or soaring peaks. Still, Girraween is uniquely itself and it seems to work. That's not due to fancy laws or grand titles but because of the people who work in the park, the volunteers and willing locals from nearby farms and towns—it works because there are enough people who care about the place. 📍

After 30 years of walking and climbing, Quentin Chester is still tapping into the call of the wild. He has written widely about his travels and tribulations, including books on Kakadu and the Kimberley, as well as many stories about his fervour for the Flinders Ranges. qchester@senet.com.au

High Plains Drifting

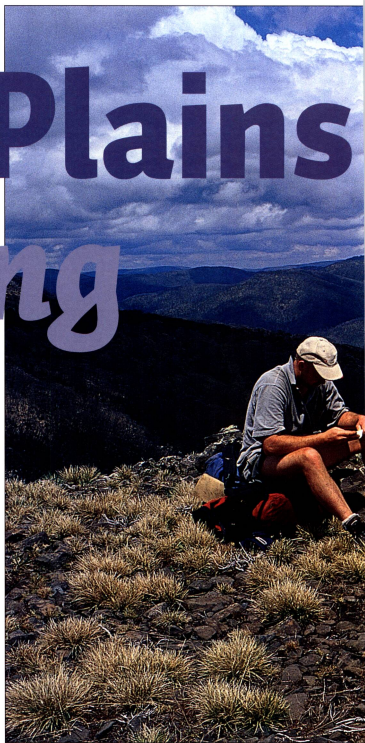
Glenn van der Knijff describes a west to east crossing of Victoria's Bogong High Plains, walking from Freeburgh to Anglers Rest

'SO, WHERE TO THIS YEAR?' I ASKED, AS WE POURED OVER MAPS OF THE Victorian High Country in search of an extended-walk destination. Instinctively, our eyes were drawn to an area familiar to us all, the Bogong High Plains in the State's north-east. Although we'd walked extensively in this area, Janis, Stephen, Tony and I were keen to cover some new ground and we soon formulated an exciting plan of completing a crossing of this vast plateau, starting in the west near Bright and ending somewhere in the vicinity of Omeo. Closer examination of the maps suggested that the small settlement of Anglers Rest, 30 kilometres north of Omeo, would make a good exit point from the plains, providing us with the chance to spend our final night in the mountains at an isolated pub called the Blue Duck Inn.

A grey dawn, and a brief rain shower, set the scene for our first day. Starting from Bright, we bundled ourselves into the car and drove along the Great Alpine Road to Freeburgh, turning up Dungeys Track. Ten minutes later we were stopped by a ford in Snowy Creek—our vehicle could go no further—so we parted company with our driver.

We set off up the track towards our first major goal, Mt Feathertop, a classic Victorian summit which we'd be accessing by the northern extension of the high ridge known as the Razorback. It had been 20 years since I last walked up this valley. Then, mature forest and thick shrubbery dominated the valley, but now it was almost unrecognisable. Evidence of bushfire was everywhere, the dead trees contrasting with the lush green hues of regrowth.

Dungeys Track led up-valley and after an hour we turned off and ascended to Stony Creek Tops where we had our first distant views of Mt Feathertop. The bushfires of 2003 had ripped through this part of the Alps, and we wondered whether there'd be any areas left unscathed.



After ascending Stony Top Track for some time we reached a grassy saddle deep within a tall forest of rejuvenating alpine ash. Loaded with water bags, we set off down a shallow gully in search of water. Prepared for a long walk, we were surprised to find water only five minutes down the gully towards Dungey Gap.

Back on the track, we soon reached the crest of the North Razorback where Mt Fainter loomed unexpectedly close beyond the deep valley of the West Kiewa River. Our camp was established just off the track with a good view to the east, but our picturesque locale soon became damp and depressing when the sky—which had looked ominous all day—grew increasingly dark and leaden. From 6 pm rain fell steadily.

The hypnotic effect of the rain made for a blissful sleep but it showed little sign of stopping by dawn. We weren't in a hurry to leave, and delayed our departure until midday when the rain eased somewhat. Continuing along the North Razorback, we reached a great viewing point where all we could see were more storm clouds scudding towards us. By the time we reached the flanks of Mt Feathertop, just two hours after breaking camp, the wind had gathered momentum and it was a battle



just to stand. We weren't keen to traverse the exposed summit in these conditions, so decided to call it quits for the day and camp on a flat shelf on the North Razorback, below Mt Feathertop's North Peak.

Pitching our tents in the gale was nearly impossible, but despite the difficulties, we established camp, gathered water from a deep gully to the east, then sat out the rest of the day in our tents.

The wind increased during the evening, and I spent a harrowing night in a sitting position, fighting against each gust while supporting the tent poles, which were bending at ridiculous angles with every blast. After only a few hours sleep, at daybreak I was keen to move on. I roused the others for a hasty breakfast, before setting forth into the tempest. A hint of blue sky and a fleeting burst of sunshine as we climbed over Mt Feathertop's North Peak heralded an improvement in the weather. On the summit of Mt Feathertop the wind had eased enough so that we could stand without too much effort.

At the tree line on the southern side of the mountain, the wind subsided considerably and we stopped for a snack at a saddle near Little Mt Feathertop. While Stephen and Janis visited the rebuilt Federation

Hut, Tony and I sat and admired the view as the clouds broke up above us. The silence was eerie, with not even the hint of a bird's call to be heard above the sound of the breeze. In an area where bird life had always been common, the fire's desecration of the forest meant that most wildlife had perished or moved on to more habitable areas.

Our route led us south along a section of the Razorback, then on to a side track east along the Diamantina Spur. Part-way down, on a prominent knoll, the sun shone warmly and we removed our thermal wear. It looked as though we were in for a fine afternoon of walking. The upper slopes of Mt Feathertop came into view, still streaked with vestiges of winter snow. The track continued, providing pleasant walking for a while before diving steeply toward the

Janis Feldgen (left), Tony Maasackers and Stephen Hamilton on the western edge of the Bogong High Plains. Mt Loch is in the background.

All photos by the author

valley, the echoing roar of the West Kiewa River drawing us down.

We were relieved to reach the logging road and level ground deep within the confines of the upper West Kiewa valley. Above us, tall alpine ash swayed in the breeze that funnelled up the narrow valley and, at times, it appeared as though the forest would topple upon us.

Bordered by open forest and grasslands, right on the bank of the West Kiewa River, Blairs Hut was perfectly situated for a lunch stop. The log hut was a bit rundown inside but the surrounding park-like grasslands were ideal for a picnic. The weather had cleared into a beautifully warm afternoon and we bathed in the sun for a while. Later, Janis dragged out a fishing line and hook, and managed to find a stick long enough to craft a rod. Tony and I were keen to reach Westons Hut, so we left Janis and Stephen by the river. 'We'll catch four fish for entrée,' was the dubious pledge.

From Blairs Hut the main track wasn't too difficult to follow as it climbed up the hillside, then Westons Hut appeared quite unexpectedly on a sunny terrace between two infant streams. It was a fine place to camp; plenty of sunlight filtered through the trees, there was enough space for a few tents, and the photogenic hut had all the charm of a classic cattlemen's shelter. Indeed, it was still walled in timber slats—not often seen these days. Inside the hut, a warm glow emanated as light filtered through the many small cracks in the walls. Tony and I dreamt of fried trout for dinner as we waited but, as expected, Stephen and Janis arrived empty-handed.

I had a blissful slumber due to the lack of sleep the previous night, awaking to a heavy dew and a clear sky. A lazy morning and an unhurried breakfast foreshadowed the easy day ahead.

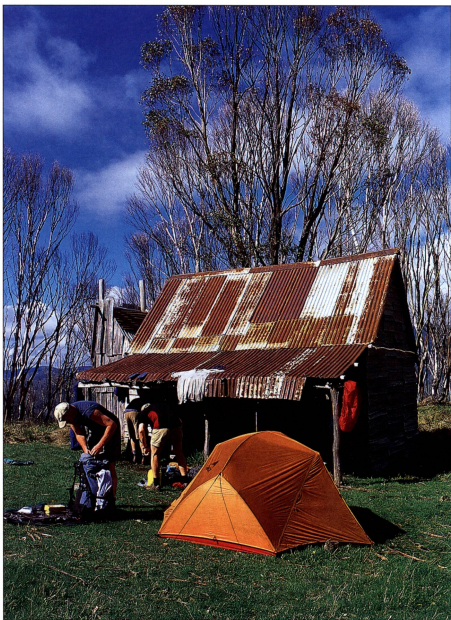
Leaving the hut, our route climbed through some old stockyards and sliprails, then eased past a few small tarns before emerging on to the Bogong High Plains. At last we were walking across the plains, so easy on the legs after the steep climbs and descents of the previous days. Above the tree line the air was warm, wildflowers were waking from their winter hibernation, and the constant drone of blowflies kept us company.

To stretch out our walk for an extra day we had decided on a detour via Mt Fainter, ten kilometres to the north. We continued over the plains in a horseshoe loop, moving effortlessly across grassy moors and on to a high point above Tawonga Huts. Beneath a big sky, seen

with fabulous effect from the lofty heights, we felt on top of the world in every sense. From this position we spied four brumbies—three adults and a foal—grazing on gentle slopes.

A few kilometres further on we climbed up a damp, grassy valley, swollen from the recent rain, and on to the boulders crowning Mt Niggerhead. A chorus of rumbling bellies hinted that

Fainter South loomed close, lightly timbered below an open top, with crags guarding the peak to the west and grassy plains sloping away to the east. A few thunderheads brewed overhead, and the odd spot of rain threatened to dampen our afternoon, so I bypassed the summit and made a beline to the edge of the forest north-east of Mt Fainter South, where I proceeded to set up camp.



RIP Westons Hut. The boys pack up, unaware that in a few months the hut would be gone. **Right**, on the other, eastern side of the High Plains, that 'fine example of bush architecture', McNamaras Hut, also makes a convenient shelter in a downpour. **Far right**, but not as welcoming as this...the walk's end, the Blue Duck Inn at Anglers Rest.

Inside the hut, a warm glow emanated as light filtered through the many small cracks in the walls. Tony and I dreamt of fried trout for dinner as we waited but, as expected, Stephen and Janis arrived empty-handed.

lunch was overdue, so we ate while admiring the views from this excellent viewing point.

Beyond the peak a faint track took us on a roller-coaster ride along the Yit-Ma-Thangs, a range of rocky peaks and plentiful small plains. We walked up and over low ridges and shallow gullies—losing the route frequently but always finding an old cattle pad heading in the right direction—and emerged on to Little Plain. Numerous small creeks trickled across the plain and it was nearly impossible to keep our feet dry.

A north-east bearing through a copse of snow gums brought us to the Fainter Fire Track. Mt

The others joined me after first visiting Mt Fainter South, and we pitched our tents to make the most of the dramatic view across the East Kiewa River valley towards Mt Bogong. Fortunately, the thunderstorm dissipated and we could fully appreciate our grandstand position. A clear morning would no doubt provide an awesome sight, I mused.

I leaped from the tent at first light only to be greeted by a thick fog. Without views there was little point in hanging around. We returned to the Fainter Fire Track, which was hard to see in the pea-soup mist, retracing part of our route

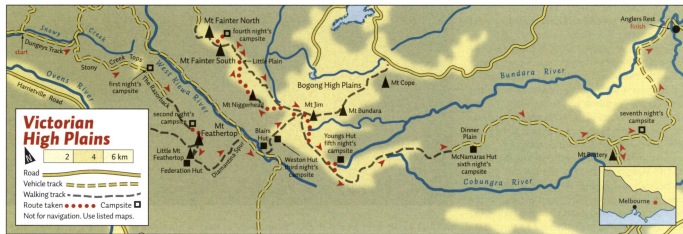
from the previous day. Heading south, we crossed Little Plain and stayed with the fire track as it led us to Tawonga Huts where the sun finally broke through the clouds.

Above the huts, our route climbed out of the forest and on to the plains along a line of snowpoles used primarily for winter navigation. At 1820 metres, where the plains reached their zenith,

plains were drenched by slowly-flowing surface water caused, in part, by the large snow patches which dotted Mt Jim's southern and eastern fringes. We strolled towards the Australian Alps Walking Track, visible in the distance as it disappeared over the crest of the plains. On the dry ground of the main track we made fast progress, soon veering left on to a

separated; Tony and I opting to join the foot track to McNamaras Hut, while Janis and Stephen took a short cut down the valley, aiming to join us further along.

Within five minutes of leaving Youngs Hut Tony and I were startled by a snorting sound emanating from the forest in front of us. Looking up, we noticed a brumby eyeballing us just



mountains came into view on all sides. We veered away from the pole line and struck out across the plains, carefully deviating our course to avoid an area of small tarns and fragile sphagnum bogs. Mt Jim loomed ahead, breaking the monotony of the barren and desolate plains that surrounded us. Composed of volcanic basalt rock, this peculiar 40 metre hillock warranted exploration even though it was slightly off our route. We reached the windswept summit, crowned in weathered snow gums and rock outcrops, and scoffed lunch on top as a warm sun beat down on us. To the south-east, meandering plains and ridges snaked into the distance in a blur of blue-green haze, making it impossible for us to decipher our exact route for the next three days.

We descended Mt Jim's southern flank and were on the sprawling plains once again. The

side track to arrive at Youngs Hut, our night's destination.

The location of Youngs Hut was idyllic, sited superbly at the head of a pretty plain with a stream flowing peacefully just a short distance away.

As I stirred at dawn the next day, low clouds raced across the sky, a few small breaks in the cover providing a colourful sunrise. The weather looked ominous and we set off at 8.30 am to try to cover as much distance as possible towards McNamaras Hut before any rain hit.

Now on the eastern side of the plains, from this point on it was country new to us all, and we were excited by the prospect of walking through some of the extensive snow plains and forests that formed the divide between the Bundarra and Cobungra Rivers. Our group briefly

30 metres away. We stopped dead in our tracks. I approached cautiously, hoping for a close-up photo, but the brumby was more scared than I and trotted guardedly away.

Cloud and mists swirled above us, rushing along on the strong northerly wind. Then the rain came, gently at first but it gathered momentum quickly. We'd been under the illusion that this would be an easy day, but the stormy conditions ensured that we'd see the High Country in a turbulent mood.

A few kilometres from Youngs Hut we met up with Janis and Stephen after wasting 45 minutes trying to find each other in the gale. Soon the track became lost amid a myriad of old cattle tracks, and petered out altogether at a large plain. We found the track again where it entered the forest, before losing it again at the

next plain. This process continued for the next few hours and we had to concentrate to stay on the correct course.

About eight kilometres from Youngs Hut, we passed through a substantial plain, the grass so lush and manicured that it looked more like a football field. Here we spotted some brumbies in the distance. In the fog the horses looked

Mt Battery Track. After lunch, we hid our rucksacks behind a tree and continued on a leisurely side trip to Mt Battery, one kilometre distant. Just off the Mt Battery Track, the 1265 metre summit—a peak I'd wanted to bag for two decades—provided a bird's-eye view west over the serpentine Cobungra River valley 400 metres below. Broken rock covered much of the sum-

Our last day dawned fine but we weren't in a hurry to leave, wanting to maximise our time in the bush. After a sluggish start we stepped back on to Grays Hill Track and climbed on to the northern summit of Gray Hill. Emu Creek Track then guided us at first east, then north, forming an easy passage through the fire-ravaged forest. There was little shade as we descended steeply towards the farmlands neighbouring the Bundara River, and even less when we reached the pastures.

The terrain bordering the Bundara River valley took on a different hue. The scorched mountain slopes and exposed ochre-coloured boulders reminded me of the countryside at Montserrat, near Barcelona in Spain, and I felt momentarily as though I were in another country and a different hemisphere.

The track reached the valley at Callaghan Road near a group of farm buildings, holiday homes and B & Bs, the warm scent of spring wafting along the valley on a gentle breeze. A bend in the Bundara River provided our first opportunity in several days to taste good running water and our last chance for a rest before hitting the road and reaching the end of our journey.

An hour later, rounding a bend in Callaghan Road, we could see a cluster of farm buildings and cabins below us, sited in a captivating valley. It took a further few paces before we realised that we were actually looking at the Blue Duck



The idyllic campsite at Youngs Hut. Right, Janis appreciates the rather black view from rocky Mt Battery, near the walk's end.

mysterious, almost ghostly, as they moved stealthily into the forest. Once out of sight, it was a strange feeling to know that they were watching our every move.

Some hours after leaving Youngs Hut the forest became increasingly thick and we eventually stumbled upon an old vehicle track, which led us past a small cattle yard and on to the large grassy expanse of Dinner Plain. At the eastern edge of the plain McNamaras Hut came into view, bang on noon, a welcome sight given that the rain had not let up all morning.

Surrounded by a lush meadow and drenched by the incessant rain, the old log hut looked particularly welcoming. While rather grotty inside, in a downpour it felt like a palace. By the time we had cleaned it, and had a crackling fire warming us, we were finally able to appreciate McNamaras Hut as a fine example of bush architecture.

The storm continued throughout the afternoon. Come evening, the gusts were still thundering down the little valley and hammering the hut, but we found enough shelter in the small yard adjacent to it to pitch our tents.

As suddenly as the storm had arrived, it abated: conditions were remarkably calm overnight. By sunrise dew covered everything but the change had brought a cloudless sky and crisp conditions—perfect for walking.

Youngs Hut Track meandered east from the hut, snaking through snow-gum forest at first, then much drier eucalypt woodland as it gradually descended.

At a track junction we veered right on to Grays Hill Track and soon passed McCoys Track on our left, before reaching the junction with



mit and south-west-facing slopes, an anomaly in an area where rounded peaks predominate.

Collecting our rucksacks, Grays Hill Track led us, in a few kilometres, to our planned overnight stop near a prominent gully. We were concerned to find that the creek was dry; bemused, too, considering the amount of water on the plains. A quick reconnoitre proved fruitful, as we found a small flow oozing from a gully about 200 metres down the valley. We camped nearby in a small clearing, close to a tiny dam the size of a 25 metre pool, possibly used as a reservoir for fire-fighting purposes.

Late in the day, in the gathering twilight, the sound of galloping startled us from our game of cards. On the hillside opposite our camp a mob of brumbies paused, inquisitively checked us out, then trotted away. They looked healthy and obviously had little trouble surviving on the sparse bushfire regrowth.

Inn. Together, we walked the final ten minutes, fully appreciating the remaining moments of solitude that were to end far too soon. 🐾

On a sad footnote, in January 2007 Westons Hut was destroyed by bushfire. See page 13 in *Wild 104* for further details on Westons Hut and the 2006–2007 bushfires in the Victorian Alps.

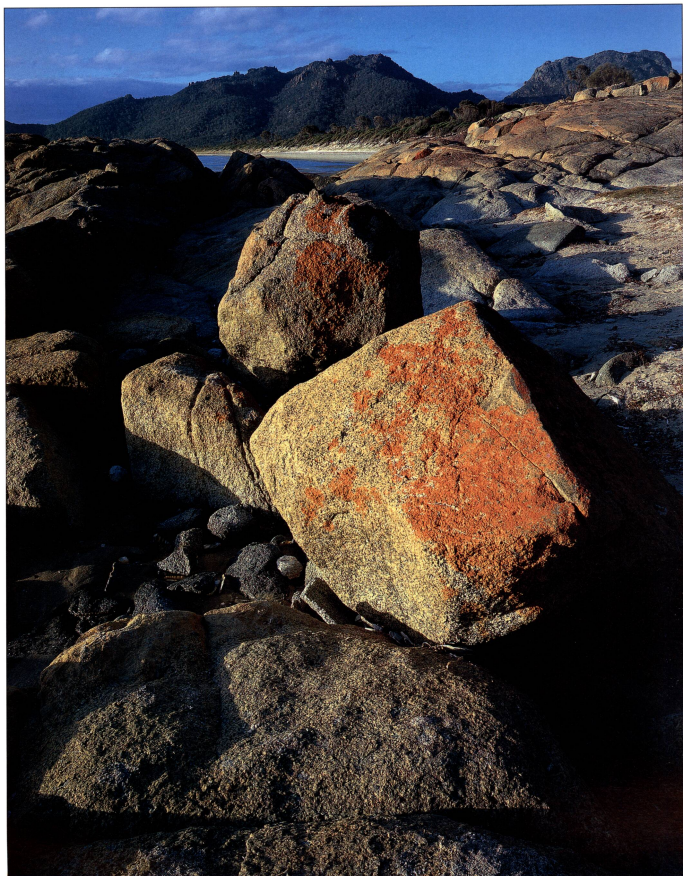
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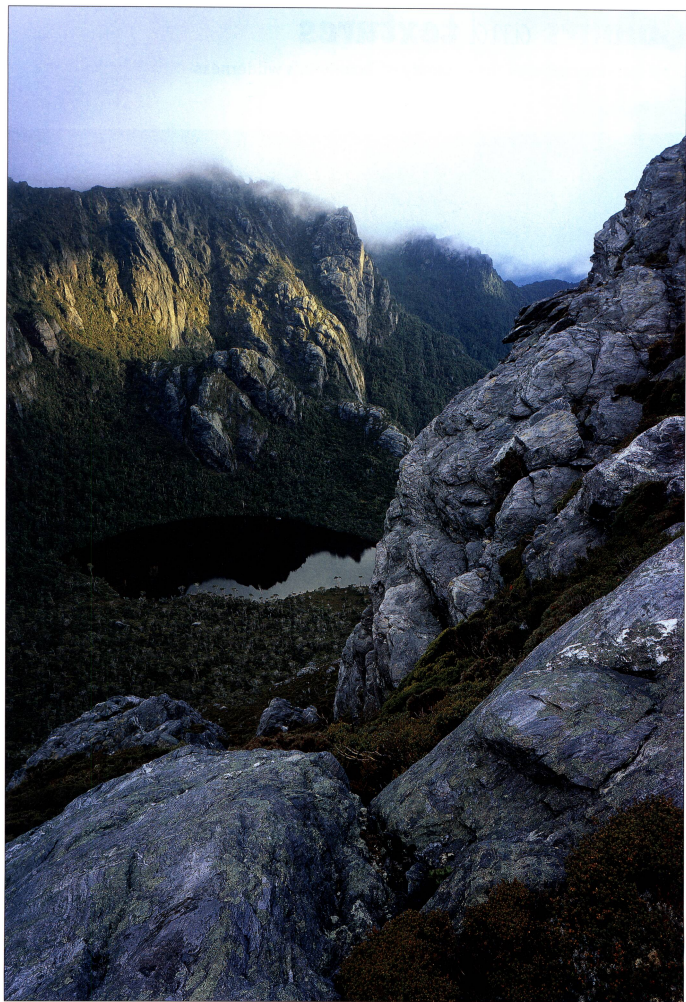
You will need the Outdoor Leisure 1:50 000 Bogong Alpine Area and Dargo Plains–Cobungra maps, as well as the 1:25 000 Shannonsvale map. All are published by Vicmap.

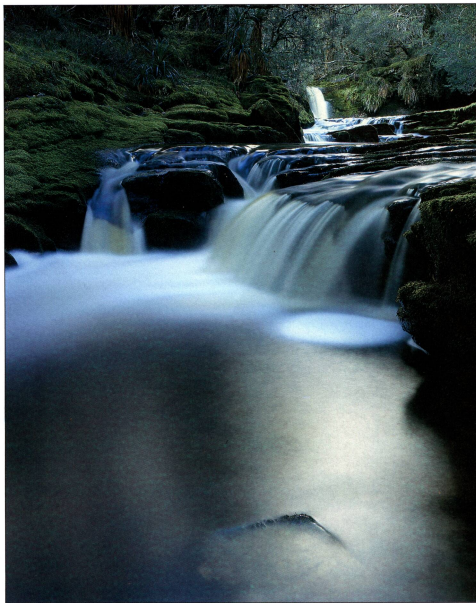
Glenn van der Kriff grew up in the Victorian Alps where he developed an insatiable interest in mountain recreation, particularly cross-country skiing and bushwalking. He's skied in Canada, the USA and Europe, trekked in Nepal, lazed on the beaches of Thailand and the Cook Islands, and travelled extensively throughout Europe. But his real passion is still for the High Country of Victoria.

Colours and textures

Scott Haskins captures the diversity of Tasmania's wilderness







Being brought up in South Africa, much of Scott Huskins' childhood memories were of the vivid colours in nature. His fascination with landscape photography has developed from his many trips into the Victorian and Tasmanian wilderness.



Photo on page 35, Hazards Beach, Freycinet National Park. **Facing page,** the mist and mystery of High Moor, Western Arthurs. **Left,** the texture of moss and twigs can almost be felt in this shot taken in Pine Valley. **Top,** waterfall at New Pelion. (Both photos taken in Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park.)

A Holy Circuit of Tibet's **Mt Kailash**



On a three-day Kora around the 'Precious Jewel' treasured by four religions, Lyndon Giffard meets pilgrims, the establishment, and an amazing mountain



MANY OF THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS AND REVERED MOUNTAINS ARE IN Asia, with great peaks like Mt Everest, K2 and the Annapurna massif all drawing a steady stream of tourists and religious pilgrims from across the continent, and the world. Yet hidden at the heart of Tibet, isolated by remote geography and political tension, stands a striking mountain more religiously significant than any other in Asia but almost unheard of in the West.

Kailash, traditionally known as Gang Rinpoche or Precious Jewel, stands isolated behind the Himalayas in remote western Tibet, surrounded by sparsely populated wilderness. Despite this, no fewer than four ancient religions hold Mt Kailash sacred. Tibetan Buddhists, India's Jains, the Bon (an ancient founding religion of Tibet) and Hindus all give the mountain a central role in their epic stories of creation and the struggle between the gods. In particular, Hindus believe that Mt Kailash is the earthly manifestation of their famed Mt Meru, heavenly abode of the god Shiva and birthplace of the entire world.

Adherents from these religions make the long, difficult journey to Mt Kailash to pay homage to the mountain's deities and perform a Kora (holy circuit) around its flanks. This is believed to provide generous karmic merit towards future reincarnations and speed the path to enlightenment. Most Tibetan pilgrims set off in the early morning hours and perform the 53 kilometre circuit in a fast-paced, 14-hour walk, while a dedicated few complete the task in prostration, bowing down flat on the ground in submission so that their body touches every centimetre of the track. A single Kora can take weeks. Tibetan Buddhists traditionally believe that 108 circuits of the mountain guarantees nirvana.

I'd read about the mountain years earlier and had been attracted towards this epic place hidden away in such mysterious isolation. While



Above, two Buddhist nuns examine Kyle Dunsire's hot chocolate, curious as to why he's not fuelling the last climb to the pass with the more standard yak-butter tea. **Karen Ashbury. Left**, the North (gold) Face of Mt Kailash rears above a tangle of carvings and prayer flags. **All uncredited photos by the author**

making an overland journey from Tasmania to London, the opportunity arose. However, getting there proved to be difficult, entailing eight days' travelling from Lhasa (Tibet's capital), in dusty trucks and buses, while discreetly avoiding Chinese authorities on the lookout for foreign travellers without official permits.

I was lucky enough to come across three other foreign travellers along the way. Chris was a Cincinnati taxi driver, Climent a Spanish cyclist, while a Japanese student named Kiro who just happened to speak Mandarin was our own precious jewel in a place where English was akin to Martian. Together, we pooled enough cash to hire a four-wheel drive for the final three days of the journey, finally reaching our destination

after crossing some giant sand dunes, a 5000 metre mountain pass and some scary rivers.

It was exhilarating when Mt Kailash first crept into view, finally to see something we'd anticipated for so long and worked so hard to reach. It was also stunning. Its distinctive—almost unnatural—appearance contrasted with any other mountain we'd seen. According to local

tradition, it is shaped like a millstone, with a shallow, pointed peak and four distinct, black granite faces. Engraved on each face are sharp-textured horizontal and vertical stratifications said to resemble the swastika, a sacred Buddhist and Hindu symbol of strength and perpetuity.

Less charismatic was Darchen, the muddy, ramshackle town at the base of Mt Kailash established to host the steady flow of pilgrims from Tibet and India. Here I had the chance to become acquainted with the local Chinese authorities known as the Public Security Bureau (PSB). I met one of them, a young woman, while walking through town soon after our arrival. With a somewhat suspicious helpfulness she had pointed their building out to me and offered to store our excess luggage while we trekked.

I thought little of it until later when, walking past the same building, I pointed it out to Chris and Kiro. Almost immediately a man approached, introducing himself as the PSB local head, and asked to see my passport. I handed it to him, expecting the usual quick inspection. Instead he took it and walked off into one of the buildings, Kiro following frantically behind. I entered to find the PSB officer sitting at his desk, a stamp held threateningly over my Chinese visa, while Kiro desperately pleaded with him not to lower it. I had no idea what was happening, but it obviously wasn't good.

After some long, tense moments Kiro was finally given a chance to explain that the building I had pointed out was the PSB's office was in fact the local brothel—the offended PSB chief now wanted to cancel my visa, giving me a day's notice

to leave China. As I was a minimum of two weeks from the nearest legal border-crossing, this would have been a major headache! Some careful diplomacy ensued. Eventually I was ordered to write a detailed confession of my crime, including an apology, which was then read out by a female assistant in clumsy English. It was like a scene from the Cultural

Revolution. Our persecutor didn't understand a single word but seemed to enjoy it none the less, handing the passport back with a smug, self-satisfied smile. Kiro and I left to buy a nerve-calming beer. The whole experience gave me a small insight into the feeling of political persecution, making me shudder at what many local people must go through.

The next morning, after acquiring supplies from the local market and preparing our gear, we were ready to set off on the Mt Kailash Kora. We planned to spend three days walking the circular route in a clockwise direction, camping along the way at designated sites. On the first day we would traverse a shallow foothill on the southern side of the mountain, before turning gradually north and heading 13 kilometres up the Lha Chu valley to camp near the Dira-puk Monastery. The next day we would take on the daunting Drolma La, a 5630 metre high pass crossing a saddle behind the mountain. The rest would be plain sailing as we followed the Lham Chu valley south again, camping near another monastery before skirting around some more foothills to our starting point.

Setting out from Darchen, we marched west along the slightly undulating route, traversing lightly grassed slopes with magnificent views across the Barkha Plain towards the holy lakes of Rakshas Tal and Manasarovar. It was already becoming clear that the altitude—at this point 4500 metres—was going to be a constant factor: our breathing was rapid and our bodies quickly tired. Despite the thin air, the rhythm of walking slowly kicked in and we made steady progress.

As the weather cleared, the elusive, snowy white peak of Mt Kailash appeared again and the harsh sun came out in a deep blue sky. The track gradually turned north and soon the Lha Chu valley opened up dramatically in front of us. With towering, orange granite cliffs and rocky, green pastures dissected by a pale blue river, it was spectacular, taking away as much breath as the altitude. I felt as though we were crossing a border into new, magical landscapes.

Following the river up the eastern side of the valley, we caught glimpses of Mt Kailash's concave western face through openings in the granite cliffs above. Each of Mt Kailash's four faces is truly distinctive, recognised symbolically by the names of precious stones: south is sapphire; west is ruby; north is gold; and, finally, east is crystal.

The track was soft, sandy and almost flat, allowing us to cover about four kilometres an hour, despite our regular 'breathing breaks'. Climent had cycled halfway across the world to get to Tibet and continually outpaced the rest of us; he was sunbaking contentedly whenever we managed to catch up to him.



A pilgrim takes a break from the Kailash Kora. Left, pilgrims climb above one of the beautiful valleys adjacent to the mountain. Right, the holy mountain rises above a holy lake: Mt Kailash's South Face overlooks Lake Manasarovar.

The spectacular views of the Lha Chu valley continued throughout the afternoon. But after four hours of a soft, flat, straight track, the going became drudgery, so I was quite relieved when the Dira-puk Monastery came into distant view. We reached a simple stone pilgrims' shelter, pitched camp and took in the sight of Mt Kailash. Rising straight above us, our progress up the valley allowed us to look up at its broad, monolithic northern or gold face.

Chris and I happily collapsed in the sun while a still energetic Kiro put on the stove to prepare a pot of green tea. As we rested, the uneven trickle of pilgrims passing slowly became a rush-hour flood as the Bon came down from the Drolma La. Unlike all the other Mt Kailash pilgrims, the Bon perform their Kora in an anti-clockwise direction, starting in the early hours of the morning to complete the Kora in one frenetic day. They shuffled past in a



continuous, rambling caravan, full of merry spirit, and expressed surprise and humour at the unexpected sight of exhausted foreigners.

One or two pilgrims who were ahead of the pack found time to sit down to share a cup of tea, and a flurry of sign language and attempted Tibetan. One man had travelled from Lhasa, and managed to convey that he was on his 43rd Kora. The wafer-thin soles of his tennis shoes seemed to prove it. Looking at our expensive boots, it became clear that bragging rights were going to be hard won in this part of the world.

The following morning I sat shivering by my stove, desperately watching the sunlight as it moved almost imperceptibly towards us across the valley floor. Today would be the hardest and most exciting of the trek as we climbed 800 metres to the top of the Drolma La and down again to the Lham Chu valley on the eastern side of the mountain. Despite the freezing night, the weather seemed to be on our side again, so we hoped Drolma, the goddess of the pass, would be also. We left camp and set off up into the mountains to find out.

clothing. I felt tempted to add my pack to the collection and admit defeat in the face of Tibetan freestyle trekking. However, reconsidering the expense of my belongings and the unlikely sympathy of my insurance company, I left behind a tacky T-shirt from Bangkok's Koh Sahn Road instead.

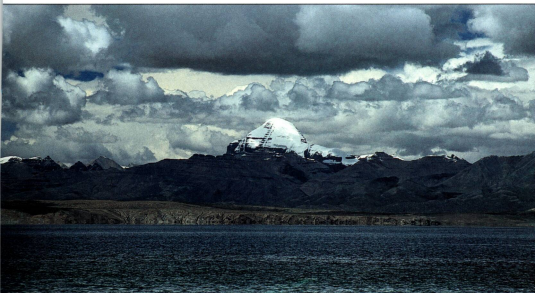
As our ascent continued over rocky glacial moraine, I endeavoured not to yearn for the pass, knowing that it would only invite mental torture. Instead I tried to appreciate the excellent views of Mt Kailash. This must have helped because while hard work, the uphill trek wasn't as bad as we had expected. By midday a spectacular, multicoloured expanse of prayer flags came into view, announcing the Drolma La.

Enthusiastically donning our packs, we relaxed in bliss beneath the canopy of bright fluttering colour, enjoying a high of endorphins mixed with oxygen depletion while lunching on Chinese People's Liberation Army (CPLA) issue energy biscuits. Not your usual trekking food, these malty bricks seem to suggest that the CPLA is both energetic and extremely flatulent.

Highway. We savoured our time at the campsite, knowing that we had long, uncomfortable journeys ahead.

On the final day of the trek, we were disappointed to wake to cool, overcast weather that obscured Mt Kailash and dulled the landscape's bright colours. It seemed the mountains eastern face was going to elude us. We walked out of the valley and back around the edge of the foothills, skirting the Barkha Plains, to Darchen where we would bid our farewells and head in different directions. During the last few miles, we passed many stone chedis surrounded by yak skulls and rocks, intricately carved with religious inscriptions and mantras expressing the patience and devotion of many centuries of religious devotees.

The amount of religious and cultural significance given to the mountain for so long begs the question of what Mt Kailash's future will hold. Its isolation has protected it for centuries, but as the fibre-optic cable stretching along Tibet's power lines testifies, the outside world is on its way.



Hidden at the heart of Tibet, isolated by remote geography and political tension, stands a striking mountain more religiously significant than any other in Asia but almost unheard of in the West.

The track left the main valley and entered another smaller one, crossing the young Lha Chu River shimmering in the sun, beginning its journey to the subcontinent. Another geographical feature of Mt Kailash that increases its symbolic importance is that four great rivers begin in the area. The Karnali begins in the south and turns into the Ganges; the Sutlej—a great river of the Punjab—begins in the west; to the north is the Indus, Pakistan's core river and backbone to 5000 years of civilisation; while the Yarlung Tsangpo begins in the east, becoming the Brahmaputra and making its journey around the Himalayas to Bangladesh.

Leaving the Lha Chu and its green pastures behind, we began to make a slow, low-gear haul up the steep, zigzagging track which characterised most of the morning's walking. Incredibly, the first pilgrims of the day were already reaching us and overtaking us, like hares passing heavily laden tortoises.

It was hammered home when we came upon the site known as Shiva Tsal. Pilgrims traditionally deposited one of their possessions here in a symbolic act of renunciation, creating an expanse of rocks covered in pieces of jettisoned

After a good break, we thought it best to leave before offending Drolma with our flatulent indulgence, and began to descend off the pass into a deep, rocky cauldron filled with turquoise lakes drip-fed by a nearby glacier. Apparently, the freezing lakes are popular bathing places for Hindu pilgrims, an activity we were content to miss.

We continued through barren rock fields, hopping our way across the boulders, before rounding a rocky shoulder ridge. Spread out in front of us like the promised land, the wide, green Lham Chu valley was beautifully lit by the sharp light and delicately shaded by drifting cloud shadows. It was a virgin landscape: simple, empty and unspoilt.

About ten kilometres up the valley we made camp near another small monastery, enjoying a feast of Chinese noodles and discussion of our future travel plans. Chris and Kiro both planned to hitch a ride east to Lhasa, while Climent would again mount his bike and try to get through Tibet's many rivers without drowning. My plan was to continue west towards distant London, hitching a ride on an oil tanker across the Aksai Chin plateau to Xinjiang and the Karakoram

A story I read involving the great Austrian mountaineer Reinhold Messner seemed to sum up the issues well. Messner had visited Mt Kailash a few years before with the intention of becoming the first man to climb the holy peak. Reaching Mt Kailash, Messner prepared for his ascent by trekking around the mountain. However, after meeting many pilgrims performing their Kora, he reconsidered, deciding that Mt Kailash was not a place for such conquering ambition. The mountain remains unclimbed to this day.

Whether future visitors show the same sensitivity and respect towards Mt Kailash's religious and cultural importance is another matter altogether. However, when leaving, I felt assured that whatever happens in the future, judging by the wafer-thin soles of an old pilgrim, the strength of care and devotion towards Gang Rinpoche is going to last for many centuries to come. 🍌

Lyndon Gifford is a native Tasmanian who at present lives in Hong Kong teaching English, but dreams of travel and photography. He fell in love with the Tasmanian wilderness after walking the Overland Track ten years ago and returns regularly.



The Wildest

**Martin Hawes
explores the
mysterious
untracked
wilderness of
South-west
Tasmania**

IT WAS THE REMOTE, TRACKLESS COUNTRY that inspired me most, the places where no one ever seemed to go, not even the gung-ho and heroic—the fractured hills and boggy plains, the nameless ridges and scrub-infested gullies, the immense tracts of untouched country that straddled the catchments of the Gordon, Giblin, Old and New—country that was not especially scenic, certainly not ‘beautiful’ in a conventional way, but which held, I sensed, a fierce and resplendent energy, as if its wildness were some kind of radiant force.

One place in particular came to represent, for me, the beating heart of the Tasmanian wilderness. I first saw that country in 1972, having spent five days battling rain, storms and dense alpine scrub reaching a bluff with a magnificent view. I was in wild country, but the land out west was wilder still: there were probably ridges and valleys out there that had never been disturbed by human footprints.

In the midst of that country stands an isolated mountain that has been climbed only three or four times. In deference to its wildness I’d prefer not to name it, so let me call it Mt Poimena—‘Poimena’ being Aboriginal for

hill. As early as 1980 I’d thought about going there, but I knew the trip would not be easy. The summit was high enough to be free of scrub, but the surrounding country was blanketed in the sort of vegetation that has made the Tasmanian wilderness legendary. I knew from experience that progress in such vegetation can be as slow as 500 metres per day. To put that in perspective, traversing 12 kilometres of such vegetation could take nearly a month—the limit for which one can carry supplies. The prospect seemed even less inviting when I peered at the mountain through binoculars and saw that extensive areas of scrubby forest on its slopes had collapsed in disorganised clumps, like badly laid thatch.

But after fantasising about the trip for 25 years, I decided it was time to give it a go. I planned a circuit of three trackless ranges, accessing Mt Poimena via the Starr Range and returning via the Collins Range. I estimated that the journey would take three weeks, two of which would be off track. On Boxing Day 2005 I set off with 25 days’ supplies, including a no-cook diet that consisted largely of freeze-dried fruit and tofu. It seemed somehow

Country



Sunbeams highlight the skyline in the Eastern Arthur Range. *Inset*, 'the magnificence of one of the last great wildernesses on earth': quartzite crags of the Western Arthur Range. All photos by the author

appropriate that I had to start my journey by stripping naked and wading across a freezing creek.

The white cockatoo appeared out of nowhere, flying into the teeth of the gale that was hurtling across the saddle below me. The wind proved too strong, blowing it backwards and out of sight. Seconds later the bird reappeared, this time soaring windward across the saddle and down into the forest beyond, its wings immobile, its feathers rippling furiously.

I witnessed this vision on the trip's eighth day and found it strangely inspiring. But the trip was not going according to plan. It was hardly a good omen that on the night before I'd left the track, the threat of flooding had forced me to shift camp in torrential rain at 2 am. The following day, only three hours after leaving the track, I'd found myself in dense scrub over my head. From then on the scrub had been relentless, contrary to what I'd inferred from the map. During the remainder of the day I covered only a few hundred metres, and the next day a few hundred more. By the time I saw the cockatoo two days later, I was barely halfway up an ascent that I'd expected to complete in a day.

I was progressing so slowly that there was no point in trying to move camp each day. Instead I pushed forward with a light pack, bashing a 'tunnel' through the scrub and marking a route through more open sections using biodegradable tape (which I later removed). One of the few advantages of walking in dense *bauera* is that once you've pushed your way through, it's comparatively easy to retrace your steps (all signs of your passage will disappear in a year or two).

Words can scarcely convey the misery I experienced on that ascent. The walking, if I can call it that—tunnelling might be a better word—was tortuous and exhausting. The weather was incessantly bleak; my clothes were continuously wet. My campsites were muddy, claustrophobic hollows, walled and roofed with dripping vines. My diary entry for 3 January reads: 'Returned to coalface but

gave up after one-and-a-half hours in freezing rain and drenching scrub. More gales.'

I consoled myself that some of Tasmania's most intrepid explorers had encountered similar conditions and had somehow kept going. I thought in particular of Alex Sklenica, who had undertaken an epic solo walk from Lake Pedder to the lower Gordon River in 1959. One of his diary entries reads: '2.30 pm. The cliff I was standing on at 8.00 am is only 200 yards away.' Stories like Alex's reminded me that I was following in the footsteps of the many explorers who had ventured into the Tasmanian wilds in past decades and centuries, and who, despite all the differences in their perspective and technology, had encountered much the same difficulties as I was now experiencing.

I crested the Starr Range on the 13th day; the summit of a mountain has rarely looked sweeter. The views were magnificent and there was a small stream—the first I'd seen in over a week. Fortunately, the crest of the range leading off to the north also appeared to be reasonably open. I found a place to camp in a wooded saddle and rested there the following day. That evening I saw the trip's first sunset.

I had already abandoned hope of completing the three-range traverse. From what I'd seen of the Collins Range, the vegetation there was just as dense and high as the scrub I had already encountered. I was not even sure that I'd have time to make it to Mt Poimena. Fortunately, the next day dawned fine, and the traverse of the Starr Range proved fairly open apart from a couple of scrubby saddles. The views from the ridge crest were stupendous, and by the end of the day I was descending the northern slopes of the range—again in ferociously thick vegetation, this time head-high, woody scrub that sprang back as soon as I'd forced my way through. I camped that night in stunted forest in a mossy enclave barely large enough for my one-person tent.

The next morning I encountered cliffs on the spur that I'd intended to descend to the

Moore Valley. Having bypassed one cliff, I came to a second that was about four metres high at its lowest point. If I'd been with other people I might have attempted it, but being alone and without a rope I wasn't prepared to take the risk. Instead, I spent half a day struggling through dense, woody scrub trying to bypass the cliff on the spur's western side. But the cliff continued across the valley and the creek dropped over a 30 metre waterfall.

The thought of the scrub-bash back up to the spur filled me with something approaching dread. But even in the midst of disappointment and exhaustion another part of my mind was in a completely different space, drinking in the austere and wondrous beauty of the place: the precipitous, densely forested valley, the splashing creek, and the slippery quartzite gully, tilted like a window looking out through clearing mist over some of the wildest country I'd ever set eyes upon.

The following morning I returned to the ridge crest to take a closer look at the cliff. After a gloomy start the morning had turned out glorious, with golden light pouring through the forest canopy. After sizing up the cliff from various angles and appraising the strength of the roots and branches that hung across it, I decided to risk it. A few minutes later I found myself at the top of an even higher cliff, definitely not one I'd risk climbing solo. The spur was impassable.

Having no chance now of reaching Mt Poimena, I decided to look for an alternative route that I could attempt on a second trip later in the summer. Another spur to the northwest looked promising, although it was a less direct route to the mountain. By mid-morning I was back on the alpine plateau at the head of the two spurs. The sky was blue and the air was still, although in a spirit of play a freak gust of wind picked up my rain jacket and sent it sailing through the air like a kite. I spent the rest of the day scouting out a route towards the alternative spur. It was a superb day for walking, remaining pleasantly cool even in the direct light of the sun.

Waterfall and rainforest canopy,
South-west Tasmania.



I have long felt that there's a special quality of energy in wild places, an energy that has been building up like power in a battery for millions of years. It's as if the story of the Earth has been ceaselessly whispered from tree to tree and from rock to rock, undisturbed by man.

Late that afternoon, again at the plateau on my way back to camp, I sat on a small rocky outcrop and looked out over a breathtaking panorama that encompassed several dozen mountain ranges and one of the wildest river systems in Australia. I rested there for a long time, relishing the pleasant conditions and basking in the magnificence of one of the last great wildernesses on the planet. This was the reason I had come here. That one view made all the weeks of effort worthwhile.

But the weeks of effort had taken their toll. After 17 days of almost continual physical hardship, I had begun to succumb to a bone-deep fatigue and had spells of feeling light-headed and dizzy. I had also noticeably lost weight, weight I could scarcely afford to lose as I'd already been lean at the start of the trip. One day I was shocked to realise that even my legs had begun to look spindly—I needed those legs to get me home! I lay awake at night suffering hunger pangs and fantasising about pizzas and cheese.

I started back on the 18th day. On my descent of the Starr Range, under scudding clouds that sent patches of sunlight rippling across the landscape, I watched as a perfect circle of light tracked down a distant scrubby spur, following it precisely and deliberately as though a spotlight were being trained on it. After several minutes I realised that it was the spur I'd intended to descend at the end of my three-range traverse. It seemed that somebody up there was gently mocking my grandiose plans.

The night I arrived home happened to be the final night of the Cygnet Folk Festival. As I live in Cygnet and was keen to see some friends of mine perform, I decided to go to one of the concerts. I lasted about an hour before I had to make a break for the door. It wasn't just the sudden crowds after three weeks of solitude. More than this, I had the overwhelming sense that the silence of the wilderness had soaked into me, whispering its secrets and changing me at a fundamental level. I needed time and space to absorb the deep teachings I had received.

Two weeks later I set out again, leaving my camera gear at home and carrying an additional 100 grams of food a day. It doesn't sound much, but it made all the difference and I suffered neither weight loss nor serious hunger pangs during the trip. By the end of the first week I had broken new ground and was camped on the northern slopes of the Starr Range. Two days later, after clambering through almost vertical rainforest and skirting the tops of cliffs, I reached the spur I'd selected on the previous trip.

The crest of the spur was blanketed with an extensive area of tea tree and bauera scrub, originally perhaps six metres tall, which had been crushed flat as if some giant extraterrestrial bushwalker had been that way before me. I guessed it was an example of the 'badly laid thatch' that I'd seen through binoculars ten years before. The 'thatch' was impenetrable, but I found that with difficulty I was able to make progress over the top of it—a precarious undertaking because I was often three or four metres above the ground. I'd heard stories of early explorers who had walked

over the top of scrub, but I'd dismissed them as old bushies' tales. Patches of 'thatch'—which I assume had been flattened by snow—extended down the spur for several hundred metres before giving way to taller forests.

The weather had turned damp again. For several days in a row the sun only managed to glimmer through for about three seconds around midday—you could practically set your watch by it. One morning I stopped, took off my rain jacket and wrung half a litre of water out of my thermal vest. My high-end, high-tech, state-of-the-art rain jacket, brand new only a few months before, was leaking like a tea bag. It was simply not built for this sort of punishment. I was soaked through for much of the rest of the trip, which meant that I had to keep moving by day and spend several hours each evening wearing damp thermals to dry them out. Some days I resorted to wearing a plastic garbage bag underneath my rain jacket; it worked so well that I'm thinking of patenting it.

But while hardships make the best fireside yarns, the real story of the trip was going on at a level that the physical misery barely touched. I have long felt that there's a special quality of energy in wild places, an energy that has been building up like power in a battery for millions of years. It's as if the story of the Earth has been ceaselessly whispered from tree to tree and from rock to rock, undisturbed by man with his ambitions and preoccupations. The longer you stay in remote country the more you become aware of this energy, and from time to time it hits you with particular clarity and force. At such moments, your eyes are opened to the splendour of creation and to an immensity that no words can describe.

On the day I went thatch-walking I was treated to a view of a distant quartzite peak, so savage and defiant it stopped your heart and made the hair stand up on the back of your neck. Two days later I had a similarly awesome view down the Moore Valley, although no photograph could do it justice. Indeed there wasn't much to see: just a few nameless ridges, a distant peak and a strange, overhanging cliff in the middle distance. It wasn't spectacular, still less 'beautiful', but the atmosphere was electrifying.

I reached the upper Moore Valley on the tenth day—probably the first person to visit that place for at least 50 years. The country was comparatively open, but the button grass was up to shoulder-high, interspersed with gullies and slopes of much denser scrub. Two more days brought me to the lower slopes of Mt Poimena—within striking distance of the alpine zone.

The 13th day dawned fine and mild, with some patches of blue out east. By late morning I'd broken out of the forest and found myself climbing through subalpine vegetation, the views expanding the higher I climbed. Showers were hovering around the ranges out west, but the views remained clear and the rain held off. I paid my respects to the mountain (never having been taught how to do this, I settled for an Indian-style Namaste—'I salute the sacred in you') before scrambling up the last few hundred metres of grass and rocks to its northern summit.

The views alone were worth all the effort. In the far distance, the 30 kilometre chain of the Western and Eastern Arthurs reared like an immense sea wall holding back the ocean of wilderness to the south. To the east and south-east stood Adamsons Peak and the southern ranges. Jutting from the ocean beyond them, Eddystone Rock and Pedra Blanca looked diminutive but very clear. To the west stood the Bathurst, New Harbour, Norold and Melaleuca Ranges, Greystone Bluff, Mt Rugby—on and on. An easy half kilometre traverse brought me to the southern summit, which afforded a panorama towards the south coast. It wasn't until I saw that view that I remembered something I'd written over 25 years earlier, describing the view looking inland from New River Lagoon: 'Far away at the northern end of the lagoon, two huge trees towered like the gateway to some forgotten hinterland.' It was only then that I remembered how long I'd dreamt of standing in the place where I now stood. It was an exalted moment.

The 15th day arrived, as I wrote in my diary that evening, 'with low cloud on the hills, mist down to the valley floor and frequent showers of more substantial drizzle to keep the scrub 100 per cent dripping and saturated'. The weather being too humid to wear my trusty garbage bag, I put on two thermal vests under my leaking jacket and resolved to keep going with as few breaks as possible. Before starting my reascent of the Starr Range I paused 'to wolf down some reconstituted apple, barely even pausing to chew'. I went on to write: 'Fast progress but brutally hard on the body, and incessant discomfort only one step ahead of being totally hypothermic and miserable.' An attempt to dry my clothes late in the afternoon proved as fruitless as the intervals of sunlight were short.

The following day dawned still, with a thick blanket of fog in the valleys. By late morning it was sunny and warm, and in the early afternoon I was able to wash my clothes, which had come to resemble hazardous medical waste. By evening I was sitting near my tent on the southern Starr Range wearing dry, clean clothes, 'slurping reconstituted strawberries, warm sun on my back, with a view down to the south coast and the islands'.

Even with the benefit of well-bashed scrub-tunnels, the scrub on the descent of the Starr Range still seemed diabolically thick. The track was like a highway by comparison although fatigue took its toll, especially on the long climbs. On the 20th day I crossed the wide river for the fourth time that summer, pausing midway to admire the view. Mt Poimena looked resplendent in its wildness and apparently none the worse for my intrusion. I silently paid homage to it, and counted myself honoured for having had the chance to visit it. It was my greatest wilderness journey yet, and its hardships and exaltations will long remain etched in my memory. 🍷

Some geographical names have been changed to protect wilderness values.

Martin Hawes is a writer and wilderness photographer who has been walking in the Tasmanian wilderness for over 35 years. His works, many of them collaborative, include *The Island* (2000), *Twelve Principles* (2003), *Imperfections* (2004) and *Declaration of Freedom* (2006). See www.martinhawes.info

An EVENTFUL

A triptych of Australian adventure races: we give you a taste of a range of events, from the 48-hour walk (or run) of the Trailwalker, to the mighty Murray Marathon and the diverse distances and disciplines of rogaining



Oxfam Trailwalker: the world's greatest team challenge

Melany Markham gives us the low-down on this epic event

OVER THE PAST 26 YEARS THE OXFAM TRAILWALKER has established itself as the world's greatest team challenge. Inspired by Sir Murray MacLehose, Hong Kong's longest-serving governor and keen walker, the Trailwalker started as a military exercise and now takes place in five countries (Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, the UK and New Zealand). In Australia, the challenge is for teams of four to cover 100 kilometres of bush in less than 48 hours—and for each team to raise at least \$1000 to help to overcome poverty and suffering around the world.

Oxfam Australia organises annual Trailwalkers in Melbourne and Sydney. Both events have reputations as tough but beautiful. The Melbourne track begins in the wide open spaces of Jells Park in Wheelers Hill. Passing through the Corhanwarrabul Wetlands, then through the Churchill and Lysterfield National Parks, the track heads north through Belgrave and into the beautiful Dandenong Ranges National Park. From there it travels along the Warburton Trail before looping south of Warburton to the ups and downs of Mt Little Joe, finishing in the expansive Wesburn Park.

Typically, Melbourne weather can increase the severity of the challenge. In 2007 the temperature climbed above 37°C. Trailwalkers were at



The start of the 2007 Melbourne Oxfam Trailwalker. *Michael Efford.* Above left, walkers test out the new course as they follow Garigal National Park's Lyrebird Track during the 2007 Sydney event. *Michael Myers*

pains to keep themselves covered up, hydrated and rested. Jane Willey, a recreational walker who finished the event in about 40 hours, said: 'there were a few walkers who kept us particularly entertained; the feuding couple—she was badly sunburnt down one entire side of her body and limping with blisters—and one woman in sandals with a wedged heel, striding ahead of her teammates and berating them to keep moving and get going at the top of at least two hills!'

Olinda to Sylvan is one of the toughest legs, made even more so in 2007 by the rain. 'Rocky, downhill and deserted' was how Jane described the track. 'The night got longer and longer and the blisters started to burst, sting and rub—it's amazing how nine kilometres feels twice as long when it's dark and cold,' she said.

In Sydney, 2007 was the first year of a new course. Traversing some of the city's most beautiful suburban bush and parks, it tested the fitness and endurance of even the most experienced participants. Starting in secluded Chowder Bay

ADVENTURE

in Mosman, on the foreshore of Sydney Harbour, the course wandered through the beaches and parks of the Balmoral area all the way to the Spit Bridge. In Sydney's northern suburbs, it followed the official 'Harbour to Hawkesbury Walking Track', before traversing the Garigal National Park from Seaforth Oval all the way to St Ives. Following Middle Harbour Creek, there are numerous stunning views, particularly near Frenchs Forest and Killarney Heights. Continuing northward through Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, the track twists and turns its way along the rugged bush tracks of the Warrimoo, Sphinx and Gibberagong Tracks, to the outskirts of northern Sydney. As the track ventures closer to its final destination, it exits the Bobbin Head precinct, skirting alongside Cowan Creek via the Berowra and Mt Ku-ring-gai Tracks. Connecting with the 'Great North Walk' at Mt Ku-ring-gai, the track throws out some final challenges as it climbs rocky ridges with beautiful views of Berowra Creek and the Hawkesbury River, before a triumphant finish at the riverside township of Brooklyn.

Richard Green has been a runner for 11 years and describes Trailwalker as a unique event, as running events rarely involve true teamwork. Having participated for five years, he says that the new Sydney course has the reputation as being the toughest of the Australian events, and possibly the hardest in the world. His team, the Sydney Striders Foreign Legion, came first in the 2007 event in 12 hours, 56 minutes. 'The scenery is beautiful even though the track goes through the suburbs. The last sections are the toughest because they are undulating, steep, rugged and, for most people, dark,' he said. 'Even when I don't compete, I will volunteer during Oxfam Trailwalker because the atmosphere is great,' he added.

'The track in Sydney is narrow and technically difficult. At times, the track is single file and clings to the edge of a cliff. Regardless of whether you are walking or running, there are places that are downright difficult,' said Green.

Before each event, teams are required to co-opt support crews of family or friends who will help them throughout the event. A good support crew is essential and can make or break the Trailwalker experience.

More than 700 volunteers work tirelessly on the event weekend in various roles, from checkpoint coordinators and track marshals to drivers and physiotherapists. Many Oxfam volunteers also provide food, toilets, first aid and massages at the eight checkpoints along the way.

Registration has now opened for the Oxfam Trailwalker Melbourne 2008; check the web site www2.oxfam.org.au/trailwalker/melbourne/ if you think you might be up to the challenge. Sydney registration will open in April 2008, so if you're in Sydney and keen to participate, bookmark this page: www2.oxfam.org.au/trailwalker/sydney/

Murray Marathon: everyone's a winner

The Red Cross's Laurelle Keough runs us through the origins of the race following Australia's greatest river



Paddlers in the 2006 Murray Marathon await the starting gun. Zan King

IT ALL BEGAN BACK IN THE SUMMER OF 1969. In an effort to engage 18–25 year-olds in Australian Red Cross, the humanitarian organisation formed a special group, 'The Trendsetters'. The Trendsetters were young volunteers with a mission—each to raise at least \$250. One of the volunteers, Mark Thornthwaite, decided to raise his \$250 by paddling 250 miles down the Murray River from Yarrowonga to Swan Hill.

His family got behind him, and pretty soon they had mapped out a five-day course that took in some of the most spectacular reaches of the Murray. It was an exhausted but elated Mark who crossed the finishing line with his ten friends. The 'Red Cross Murray Marathon' was a success, and a new Australian sporting tradition was born.

Thirty-nine years later, and the 404 kilometre course is pretty much the same as it was back then. Except last year, around 750 paddlers, 250 Red Cross volunteers and 3000 support crew from throughout Australia and the world raised almost \$270 000 for the Red Cross. The event—from 27–31 December—attracts a dedicated core of paddlers and participants. None

are more so than the committee of volunteers (many of whom were on the very first Marathon committee back in 1970) who run the event with the Red Cross. These volunteers have made the longest canoe race in Australia a survivor. It's made it through floods, drought, fire seasons and summer scorches, and even the tail end of Cyclone Tracey in 1974. In that year, committee member David Rizzoli remembers 'visions of one bloke doing a Mary Poppins on the end of a tent, flying a few feet up in the air, letting go and coming back down again, breaking his leg in the process'.

None are more passionate about the event than Bill Robinson, committee member and 63-year-old veterinarian, about to paddle in his 18th Marathon. Strong and sinewy, he has also paddled solo down the Murray from Yarrowonga to Goolwa—a 2000 kilometre journey that took him five weeks—and earlier this year paddled with friends across Bass Strait. Not content with keeping the fun of the Marathon to himself, Bill introduced his whole family to the race, resulting in his daughter, Jane, going on to become an Olympian and World Champion quad-sculler. Bill is eloquent in explaining

why he just can't help going back for more. 'When I crossed that finishing line for the first time, I was very glad I had sunglasses on', he explained. 'It's quite an emotional feeling when you complete your first Marathon. It's an achievement that nobody can take away. Even

though I was the second last boat, I had won! As long as you cross the finishing line, you've won.'

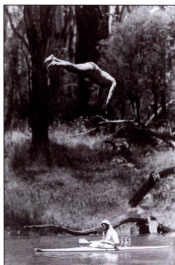
Bill has gone on to set records over the years, but he's the first to admit that's not really what it's all about. It's also about camaraderie.

Some of his most trusted friends have been made on the banks of the Murray, sharing their stories and comparing aching muscles at the campsite each night. 'We have a group of amazing superathletes who compete against each other vigorously and establish records, and we all admire them, they're the showcase', he says.

Winners of the 2006 Murray Marathon, the 'superboat' team of Nev Hargreaves, Simon Stenhouse, Michael Leverett and Tim Naughtin, are such athletes. They were the first to paddle the Marathon in under 25 hours—an incredible achievement. 'But the core of the event', Bill continues, 'are the ordinary men and women of all ages, facing a challenge, getting to the other end and raising a few bucks for Red Cross. It gives people a feeling of great self-esteem and happiness because they have achieved their goal'. Highlights for Bill have been paddling with the late Ted Jackson, an 82-year-old Murray stalwart, and double-lung-transplant recipient, Steve Peuschell. Others on the water over the years include heart attack, stroke and cancer survivors, hell-bent on having a second shot at life. 'The strong message is that age and gender are no impediments to completing the Red Cross Murray Marathon, provided one has determination and basic good health', said Bill.

Along with the superathletes, families and friends competing together, school teams are always a popular and colourful addition to the event. As are the Blues and Brothers, police officers and Koori youths, paddling together in teams in an effort to raise cultural awareness and understanding. A stolen-generation man and former police officer Merv Atkinson, of Ballarat, came up with the idea, together with Victorian Police Inspector Ian Geddes. The Blues and Brothers are preparing for their fourth Marathon.

As well as the personal challenge, family atmosphere, friendship, camaraderie and sharing of cultural awareness, there is another compelling reason to participate. A paddler's constant companions are the history, beauty and life of the Murray River itself. Paddlers pass through ancient Yorta Yorta country and, as they head out into the warmth of the rising sun in the peaceful Barmah-Millewa Forest, travel through the largest river-red-gum forest in Australia. They pass under delightful bridges, glide alongside paddle steamers in the pretty port town of Echuca, and may spot koalas, kangaroos and a plethora of bird life, including the region's magnificent white-breasted sea eagle with a wing span of up to one and a half metres. Paddlers can find themselves returning the waves and shouts of enthusiastic campers dotted along the reaches of the river, and then, coming around that final bend, face the cheering crowds on that last, memorable day in Swan Hill—ready to see in the New Year with a well-earned celebration.



Clockwise from top, support crew and spectators at Echuca. King. Unexpected hazards of Marathons in the 1970s: you've got to look out for those coming in from above. Bill McAuley. How times have changed: the 'blessing of the fleet' before paddlers set off from Yarrowonga in the late 1970s. Jonathan Mayne collection. Murray Marathon stalwart Bill Robinson gives paddling partner and first-timer Gill Gibson a helping hand during the 2006 event. Liam Lynch

The event covers 404 kilometres, from Yarrowonga to Swan Hill, and runs from 27–31 December each year. For more information, please visit www.redcross.org.au/vic/murraymarathon. htm or contact Zan King on (03) 8327 7742 or by email: sking@redcross.org.au

Rogaining: orienteering on steroids

Joel Mackay discusses 'Australia's own sport' in all its lengths, diversity and permutations

IN JULY 2007 I FOUND MYSELF LINING UP TO compete in the Australian Rogaining Championships with a bloke I had met once: a newly married Phil Whitten. Conveniently, Phil and his bride Belinda had organised a honeymoon walking the Larapinta Trail just before the event, which was held in the Eastern Macdonnell Ranges near Alice Springs. Belinda was competing with a friend they had met the week before on the track, her sole instruction to me: 'make him suffer'. I did not enquire further into the nature of their marriage, nor their honeymoon...

Rogaining is a long-distance cross-country navigation sport. With around 60 checkpoints worth different points spread over 200 square kilometres of terrain, the aim is to plan your route in such a way as to collect the highest score



Rogainers at Goobang National Park, New South Wales, listen intently to the final instructions. Dayle Green. **Right**, Phil Whitten crosses the dry Ross River during the team's winning performance at the 2007 Australian Rogaining Championships. Joel Mackay. **Top right**, Victoria University students soak up the view after getting an 80-point checkpoint during the 2006 Nigel Aylott Victorian Championships near Tallangatta. Joe Ma

by accurately navigating to checkpoints on topographic features. Rogaining is closely related to orienteering and the Karrimor mountain marathon events that started in the UK in 1968.

Traditional rogaining events run for 24 hours, beginning at midday. The afternoon is fast while the legs are fresh, then the challenges of night navigation, a new day and the struggle back to the finishing line. Shorter, six-hour events are popular, while 12-hour rogaines sample all the elements with fewer physical challenges.

Originating in Australia, rogaining has been exported to the world, with regular events in 20 countries. It traces its roots to the Melbourne University 24-hour walk, first held in 1947. This concept migrated to other universities, and in Adelaide evolved from a set course (like orienteering) into a fixed-duration event. In 1968 the first rules were established for the official intervarsity sport of '24-hour orienteering'. Rogaining would probably have only had a few key events—much like the Trailwalker—except for the establishment of formal organisational structures



including the Australian Rogaining Association, now boasting 5900 regular members.

Several variations on the rogaining theme have developed over the years, each with its own experts and adherents. A metrogaïne is well suited to beginners, entailing simpler navigation in a suburban environment. Cyclogaines are done by bicycle (who would have thought!), with map-reading best done while stationary. Tackling the course on skis (a snogaïne) or by boat (a paddlogaïne) are further options. There are few gear requirements other than common sense and a whistle, although rogainers are gear freaks who analyse the weight of every item of food, equipment or clothing.

Three hours before the start of the 2007 Rogaining Championships we settled down for a couple of hours of agonising and route planning. What would be the best value for our effort? Which checkpoints should we get and in what order? Should we do it in one loop or come back to base? The key is to leave options so you can change tack while out on the course. Oh, and to get back in time!

When I competed in my first rogaine six years ago, I was familiar with topographic maps and

could roughly work out my position when bush-walking on tracks. Through the sport I quickly learned the skills to go cross-country with confidence, interpreting every contour bend and correlating the map with the ground.

Night navigation is an unique aspect of rogaining. It is easy to lose direction, make assumptions or mistakes: the slow tortoise can embarrass the hare through good technique, concentration and basic skills such as compass bearings and pace counting. I usually have a really tough patch just before sunrise, but when the sun comes up, it revives both spirits and energy.

When competing in an event, you never know how you are doing until the results are announced as each team has taken its own route and found different checkpoints. Instead, the challenge is psychological: to keep your partner's spirits up and not get despondent about a poor patch. At the award presentation I was woken to the surprise announcement that our score was just enough to win the event! We had snuck in ahead of Dave Baldwin and Julie Quinn, who had suffered an unfortunate gear malfunction.

Rogaining is a sport in which the best women match it with the men. There are men's, women's, junior and veteran's categories, but mixed teams are the most popular. For the vast majority of participants, rogaining is a social sport. It provides a controlled environment in which to enjoy the outdoors, develop self-reliance skills, chat with mates and push personal boundaries. All in a weekend—then back to work. **1**

For more information about rogaining, please visit www.rogaine.asn.au



Sally Goulet exchanges the usual New Year's Eve chaos and crowds for the calm of the Cooloola National Park

TRADITIONALLY HOME OF THE KABI KABI people, the meandering Noosa River is within the Cooloola National Park. To paddle silently through the Kabi Kabi country, imagining the atmosphere of corroborees performed at places such as Fig Tree Point, creates an incredible sense of awe. Today, the river is the home of more than 29 species of threatened flora and fauna. Once threatened by pine plantations, the river remains a true treasure chest of biodiversity. Over New Year's Eve in 2007, I had the opportunity to escape the usual chaos and opt for the gentle, quiet wilderness of the Noosa River.

Elanda Point—campsite two

The morning air was still when we arrived at Lake Cootharaba, the sky blue and promising. A wave of jubilation passed over me; perhaps we'd be fortunate enough to escape the weatherman's gloomy predictions of rain. Dawn arrived as we began to load the canoe at the launch site, the locals twittering excitedly in the trees. We stood at the back tray of the car packing our food into plastic bags as a couple of vehicles rolled in carrying three kayaks and a canoe. I sighed to myself and wondered why these folk were up so early—it's New Year's Eve! It became apparent we were not alone in our vision of a secluded new year, far from the crowds.

With the wind slowly gathering, we launched the canoe into the lake. Stories of treacherous crossings of Lake Cootharaba were etched in my mind—I knew it was time to get moving. Crossing the Lake to Kinaba Information Centre,

Happy PADDLING

we jealously eyed the ease with which the kayakers travelled. With their attachable sails, they appeared simply to kick back and enjoy the ride. At that moment I was sold on the idea of kayaking—what a leisurely means of travel!

Kinaba Information Centre (Queensland Parks & Wildlife Services, QPWS) is at the entrance of the Everglades and lower Noosa River, and is only accessible by foot (from Elanda Point) or by boat. Kinaba is a convenient and enjoyable place to take a break, browse over the QPWS information and get excited about the adventure ahead.

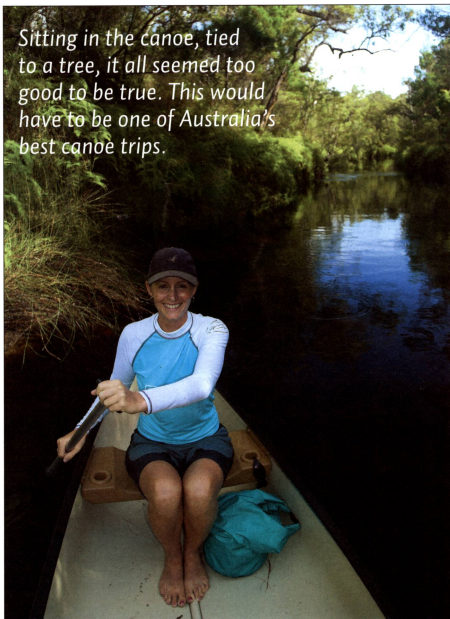
A number of canoes were moored at Kinaba, most on the journey out, with a handful of happy foreigners taking the opportunity to light up their cookers. They sat in a small circle bustling contently amongst themselves, seemingly oblivious to anyone around them. It was a good sign. We were tempted to do the same; a cup of tea would have gone down a treat, but we were far too impatient! Having the open water canoeing in the bag, I was eager to spend the next four days discovering the wonders of the Everglades and the upper Noosa River.

Fans of milky green and orange reeds edge the black waters of the river; the paperbark trees and wallum banksias drape themselves gracefully, a haven and delicacy for little birds and many other forms of life. Drifting silently along the edges of the river bank, the canoe slid gently under overhanging branches. Little birds such as the white-cheeked honeyeater could be viewed within arm's reach, devouring enormous banksia flowers and caring little about our passage.

Our first port of call appeared after one and a half hours of easy paddling from Kinaba. At Harrys Hut we landed at the campers' jetty. A swift dip was irresistible despite the QPWS's

Left, Steven Nowakowski explores the Cooloola Sandpatch, one of two major sandblows in the national park. *Sally Goullet.* **Right,** the author on Teewah Creek, greeting the new year with a smile. *All uncredited photos Steven Nowakowski*

Sitting in the canoe, tied to a tree, it all seemed too good to be true. This would have to be one of Australia's best canoe trips.



New Year: THE NOOSA RIVER

warning signs about bull sharks, which allegedly frequent the area. Long-time visitors to the river are convinced that they are a recent phenomenon. Many think that artificial waterways have altered the river's natural ecosystem and caused the increase in bull shark numbers.

We devoured our morning snacks while sitting on the jetty, observing our surrounds in silence. At Harrys Hut the river is significantly wider than the 'narrows' of the lower Noosa River. Here, we could see more open heathland on the opposite bank, magnificent scribbly gums and bloodwoods. Our daydreams were soon interrupted by a group of approaching chatterbox canoeists. With haste, but no ill intentions, we stuffed our smorgasbord back into the dry bags and were soon in the tub and en route to our designated camp, campsite two.

On approaching campsite one, I was surprised by the quiet and well-equipped group positioned under an annex on the jetty, dealing a round of cards. They appeared to be a family or a group of good friends, reminding me of my childhood growing up on the Murray River. I smiled, assuming they had visited this spot many times before, and found a part of me yearned to join them. I experienced a fleeting moment of wistfulness for my family and the old days. I

breathed a deep sigh. The luxuriant vegetation surrounding the campsite and the placid black water of the river were utterly delightful. My paddling gathered momentum.

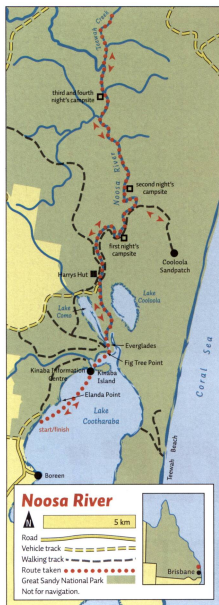
Another half an hour of paddling brought us to campsite two—equally impressive as one—although with a yacht moored at the landing. With gear spread all over the bank, we began

bookings, so is best avoided by those seeking seclusion. Toilets are provided. Campsite three is the uppermost limit for all powerboats on the river.

From campsite three we made our way up to Cooloola Sandpatch (12 kilometres return), leaving our canoe tied to the jetty and taking only water and snacks. Although a relatively



From left to right: enjoying the serenity of the Noosa River near Harrys Hut. The trusty steed. The famous Harrys Hut, an old timber-getters' dwelling. A scribbly gum lives up to its name.



to doubt our 'one group only' deal with QPWS. We approached the vessel with heavy hearts, quickly rehearsing our kind request. However, our dismay lifted when the female captain aboard called out that they'd 'be leaving very soon'. A secluded New Year's Eve was still on the menu.

Campsite two was on the luxurious side, with a rainwater tank and toilets provided. (Campsite one also has toilets.)

The remaining hours of New Year's Eve allowed our new world to sweep over us, reawakening our senses. We relished a simple cooked meal, followed by fruitcake and custard. We didn't see in the new year, but for a long time we sat in the centre of the Noosa River, a sky full of stars and a cup of the finest port in our hands.

Campsite two—campsite five

We greeted 2007 with a refreshing dip in the river, a coffee and breakfast. I perched myself on a comfortable log down at the water's edge, and began to catch up on my diary. Despite a few drops of rain on the tent overnight, the morning sky looked in good shape for the day ahead. As I sat writing, three canoes passed by close to the bank, heading up river. We exchanged friendly New Year's greetings and broad smiles. Suddenly overwhelmed with genuine feelings of delight, I chuckled to myself and wondered when I had last greeted anyone with such gusto on the morning of New Year's Day.

It seemed that as soon as we were back on the water we were at campsite three. I was astonished that we had not heard the slightest sound from the noisy mob who occupied this camp. Campsite three caters for large group

easy walk, it is best enjoyed early in the morning or in the cooler months of the year due to its exposure. We left our walk a little too late, and by the time we reached the Sandpatch it was sweltering. We soon realised we should have carried more water, but the masses of banksias, blackbutt forest and wildflowers diverted our attention. The pink, yellow and white of wildflowers dotted the landscape, and the wallum banksias attracted insects and birds.

Cooloola Sandpatch is one of two major sandblows in Cooloola National Park. Panoramic views over the ocean to Teewah Beach, and Lake Cootharaba to the south can be seen from the top. The view is spectacular but glary—you'll be glad you remembered sunglasses and a hat.

The walk down took little time, and we were soon plunging into the cool waters of the river. With a hyperactive hoard of children splashing about, I had to wonder what lurked under that deep, dark water. Possessing a famously flamboyant imagination, my dips were kept short!

Another 20 minutes up river, we passed campsite four, soon after stumbling upon our camp, campsite five. The soft, flowering overhang of tree branches at the little sandy port, the big old scribbly gum, and the pretty grass trees edging down towards the sandy bottom of the tannin-stained water were the most wonderful welcome. It was a strange feeling to know that the only way to this part of the river is to walk or paddle—no cars, no motor bikes, not even motor boats.

There was bountiful bird life at dusk: little honeyeaters came down to feed on the banksias along the water's edge; egrets plunged into the water then sat on logs, wings outstretched. Yellow-breasted robins flittered be-

tween shrubs and grasses and Brahminy kites and sea eagles soared high above.

Coffee was brewed and books drawn from the dry bags. Sitting in the canoe, tied to a tree, it all seemed too good to be true. This would have to be one of Australia's best canoe trips. As dusk came in I took the canoe out for a paddle. 'I'll start with dinner. It'll be ready for

when you come back,' called Steven, untying the rope and tossing it to me in the boat. 'Gosh,' I thought with a smile, 'you beauty'.

Upon my (well-timed) arrival back to camp, we both jumped back into the canoe and, under the bright light of an almost full moon, we devoured our creamy pasta with tuna and salsa. We sat out in the middle of the river for a

turned our boat around. And down came the rain.

The sky opened and it poured. The greenery turned more vibrant in colour and, to my sheer delight, a pair of azure kingfishers appeared, swooping and playing ahead of us, all the way back down the creek. By the time we emerged from Teewah Creek to the Noosa River, we were



Visitor Information

By Simon Collyer

Campsites for the upper Noosa River must be pre-booked and permits obtained before arrival. Contact the rangers on (07) 5449 7792. Campfires aren't allowed above Harrys Hut and all cooking must be done on fuel stoves. Motor boats are prohibited beyond campsite three. The Harrys Hut Road, which comes in from the Cooloola Way, is recommended for four-wheel-drive vehicles only, especially after rain. In dry weather, the head of Teewah Creek can be reached from a side track branching from the rough gravel road of the Cooloola Way. It takes one and three-quarter hours one way (42 kilometres) to drive a vehicle from Elanda Point to the head of Teewah Creek. Canoeing down the narrow, twisting, fast-flowing Teewah Creek to the start of the Upper Noosa River takes approximately two hours (six kilometres) and is a photographer's delight. Local canoe hire is available from Elanda Point: www.elanda.com.au/can.htm

Harrys Hut

The area around Harrys Hut was once the site of a logging camp. Kauri and hoop pine, cypress and beech were cut from the forest to the east of the Upper Noosa River, floated downstream to this site and then taken out by bullock and horse teams. In the 1950s, after the logging period was over, Harry Spring, a chemist who owned the pharmacy in Cooroy, began to use and maintain the old timber-getters' hut there for his bass fishing expeditions up the Noosa River.

while, until we decided it was time to fetch Madeira cake and port, then return once again to the centre of the Noosa River.

Campsite five—campsite 13

Emerging from the tent in the morning it was hard to believe it had rained overnight. Formalities as usual; dip, coffee, breakfast. We were on the water early, heading for campsite 13. The journey was incredibly scenic, passing through narrow parts of the river followed by another wide section of open heathland. Not too far up river we reached campsite eight, then nine.

Campsite 13 is on a bend, the entrance hidden amongst reeds. We found it to be a great spot, although very different from the other campsites. QPWS has moved the camp a little further back from the water due to erosion and have planted native trees along the bank. The designated camping area is well done; however, I felt sad for the grand old banksia trees, their trunks sawn off due to 'risk management'. Despite this, it was a well-shaded spot.

The following day, our last day before making our journey back down the Noosa River, we headed out in the canoe around midday. We planned to spend the afternoon exploring Teewah Creek, 20 minutes upstream on the right-hand side of the river. We left camp under a slightly threatening sky, prepared with our skin tops and swimmers and with cameras in dry bags.

According to Steven, it was unfortunate that we had an overcast day. However, upon our entrance into the dainty little creek, it seemed the opposite. The brilliant green of ferns and the dark sky created an enchanting atmosphere upon little Teewah Creek. Paddling softly, I was in awe. We tried to paddle to the old bridge ruin; however, fallen trees and branches from a recent storm stopped us. Feeling disappointed, we

soaked and shivering, our lips purple. I did not want to leave, I envied the kingfishers!

We paddled back to camp and a great sense of sadness overwhelmed me—we were going home tomorrow. The rain eased as we pulled into land, and we soon cooked dinner. My spirits lifted as we once again clambered back into the canoe, our dinner in one hand, a cup of port in the other. Under a starry sky and an almost full moon, I breathed the magic once again. It's not over, not yet.

Campsite 13—Elanda Point

The journey from the upper Noosa River to Elanda Point requires a day of easy but steady paddling. We knew we'd make it back to our car in good time. However, our main concern was the condition of Lake Cootharaba by mid-afternoon. We had our first major stop at campsite one, from where it was a relatively short paddle to Harrys Hut, followed by another hour or so to Kinaba Information Centre.

Such a long day of paddling (approximately six hours) is not particularly advisable. Had we booked campsites earlier, we would have enjoyed a last overnight stop at either campsite one or two, then progressed to Elanda Point the following day.

Much to our relief, Lake Cootharaba was calm enough to allow safe passage. We arrived back at our car by 2 pm. It had been a long day, and a most rewarding four-day journey. Perhaps next spring we'd return, catch the wildflowers in bloom, watch the early morning fog lift from the water and walk to the Sandpatch under a full moon... ☺

Beginning with several nights up on the Bogong High Plains in 1999, Sally Goullet's affection for true wilderness and seclusion has since taken her to remote regions of northern Sweden, Tasmania and far north Queensland.

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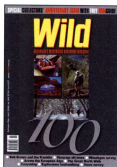
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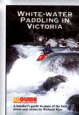
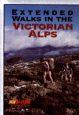
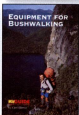
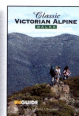
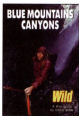
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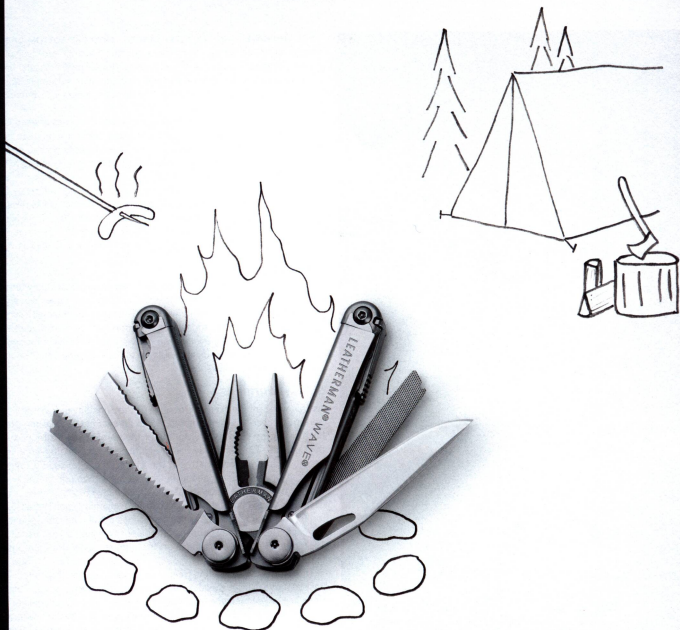
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Gorgeous gorges OF THE Bungonia



John Wilde goes river walking in the heart of New South Wales, exploring the middle Shoalhaven River and Bungonia Creek

ONCE YOU HAVE MADE THE STEEP DESCENT INTO THE BOTTOM OF THE valley, Bungonia Conservation Area and the Shoalhaven River offer rugged, beautiful walking in diverse river settings. The spectacular limestone cliffs and gorges provide an ideal venue for many adventure sports, and as a result the area is well known to cavers, climbers, canyoneers and canoeists.

In essence, the area is a plateau intersected by a series of deep canyons and ravines carved by creeks and rivers. While the plateau is at around the 600 metre contour, the Shoalhaven River flows 500 metres lower, making for steep walking into and out of the region, adding to the area's remote and wild feel.

There are a number of walking options, from easy, relatively flat colour-coded walks on the plateau, to extended multiday walks through the Bungonia Canyon and along the Shoalhaven River. These Track Notes concentrate on the latter. For information about the shorter options, visit the ranger station at Bungonia Reserve or phone (02) 4844 4341.

When to go

Because of its lower elevation, walking in this area is ideal at any time of the year. It can be particularly pleasant on crisp winter days when you are unlikely to encounter other walkers. The area is popular with school groups, especially in the spring, but once upstream of the confluence of Bungonia Creek and the Shoalhaven you are unlikely to encounter many people. There are many lovely pools for a dip in summer, and the river crossings become a pleasure.

Safety/warnings

As this walk entails several crossings of the Shoalhaven River, it is important to check river heights and keep an eye on the weather. (River heights can be seen on the Bureau of Meteorology web site at www.bom.gov.au.) The walk may become difficult if the Shoalhaven River's height is more than 0.8 metres at the 'Hillview' gauge, and I'd suggest that the walk be abandoned at heights of more than one metre. However, in the last two years it has only been above this height for a few days. It is also important to check that the Bungonia region is not closed for 'feral animal reduction', which sometimes entails the aerial shooting of goats. This generally happens for one or two weeks a year, usually in September. Contact the ranger on the number above for more information.

The 'Red Track' descent is steep—although a rope isn't required, it is best to move cautiously on exposed areas or if the rock is wet. Finally, there is a large limestone quarry on the northern side of Bungonia Creek that conducts blasting at around 3 pm most days. It is best to make sure that you are not directly beneath the quarry site at this time. Please register your trip intentions in the logbook at the ranger station.

Access

The Bungonia area is east of Goulburn, and can be reached in two ways. There is a signpost to the Bungonia Conservation Area from the Hume Highway, about 30 kilometres north of Goulburn, but it can also be accessed directly from Goulburn by taking the Braidwood Road initially and following the signs on a left turn at the outskirts of the city. It is about 25 kilometres from the highway to the Bungonia Conservation Area either way. The walk may be extended by starting at Badgers Lookout or Long Point, off the Tallong Road, and walking upstream to the Bungonia Creek junction, but a car shuttle and an offshoot walk to Bungonia Canyon are then needed. The area is administered by NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), and is either part of the Morton National Park or the Bungonia Conservation Area.

It is worth a drive to the Lookdown at the end of Bungonia Road to take in the view overlooking Troy Wall. You get a good perspective of the area from this spectacular viewing point. For those not interested in overnight walking, this may be of enough interest to make the trip worth while.

Region

The walk at a glance

Grade	Moderate; short days but a steep descent and ascent
Length	Three days
Type	Gorges, canyons and rivers
Region	South-eastern NSW
Nearest town	Goulburn
Start, finish	Bungonia ranger station
Map	Coorua 1:25,000 CMA
Best time	Year round
Further reading	Fitzroy Falls and Beyond, by the Budawang Committee



Facilities

There is a campsite at Bungonia Conservation Area with flushing toilets, showers and a day-use cooking area with sinks and stoves. NPWS fees apply for both day use and camping. Some caving areas also have long-drop toilets and water (boiling is recommended).

The walk

The best car park is at the picnic area 500 metres before Bungonia Lookdown. If you have a NPWS pass you won't have to pay extra parking fees.

Cross the road and follow the obvious track north and west for several hundred metres to the start of a steep descent. Though loose in places, the track is well marked with metallic red flashes. Be careful not to continue on the green track, which continues west and completes a circuit to Adams Lookout. The track soon descends the obvious gully formed by Bretons Creek and the Efflux, which drains many of Bungonia's caves. The track drops around 400 metres in just over half a kilometre, the walls closing in as you reach the start of Bungonia Canyon. Make a sharp right and follow the creek-bed (usually dry) east down the canyon. Take your time on this next section. It is spectacular. If you look carefully you will see the hangers and other climbing paraphernalia on routes more than 300 metres high. If you are lucky you may see climbing teams high on one of the cliffs, like flies on a wall. This must be one of the more spectacular climbing areas in NSW!

About a kilometre down the creek-bed you will come to the boulder choke and the end of the canyon. Huge, house-sized monoliths fallen from the cliffs in aeons gone by block the way, and there isn't just one way through. You may wish to drop your pack to reconnoitre. I usually start slightly to the left and make the first few tricky moves, then slip off my pack to negotiate a small cave formed by two massive boulders. Then I move up on the right-hand side over a couple of ledges to the pools below. This is a great rest spot and a final chance to admire the spectacular canyon.

Continue descending along either bank of Bungonia Creek for two kilometres, past the other branch of the Red Track, to the Shoalhaven confluence. Take heed of the blasting warning signs. There are many good campsites in this area. (Camping in the upper sections of Bungonia Creek is banned to avoid degradation of the confined spaces.) There is a large grassy area shortly before you reach the junction with the Shoalhaven valley which is popular with groups, as well as many small, beautiful campsites on either side of Bungonia Creek near the confluence, or just upstream on the Shoalhaven River.

River crossings on the Shoalhaven: some love 'em, some don't! Left, the view upstream to Blockup Gorge. All photos by the author

Although this is a short day, you will probably have spent some time on the descent and negotiating the boulder choke, and the energetic can go exploring down the Shoalhaven. Besides, the campsites are lovely and a swim is usually in order. Enjoy this lovely spot.

Day two

It is now time to negotiate the banks of the Shoalhaven. The first section is a bit of a scramble, but after half a kilometre sand and gravel banks predominate and it is even possible to take short cuts through the she-oaks. You'll come across many more beautiful campsites, so there is plenty of scope for varying the walk. Whatever you do, don't take the 'White Track'—this leaves from the confluence and ascends Mt Ayre, ending up back at the Lookdown.

It is best to stay on the western bank initially, especially when the river is high. After approximately two kilometres a steep cliff drops from near the summit of Mt Ayre to the river bank (GR 293443). This is an ideal crossing point as the river is shallow here, generally only knee-deep. Continue along the eastern bank for about another kilometre to the next crossing point, above a small rapid at GR 288438. The crossing is wide but normally shallow, over a series of slippery, wet rocks.

Dry your feet in the she-oak forest on the western river bank, then cover the next three kilometres to the base of the Bridle Track, originally an old mule track to service the long derelict Tolwong Mines. The start of this track is easy to miss from down on the river bank, so keep your eyes open for a blue track marker and some small cairns. There is a lovely campsite in the she-oaks above a small sandy beach which can be used if desired. If not, continue upstream for several more kilometres, past two old chimney stacks and kiln complexes on the far bank. It is worth inspecting these, the best crossing point being about 300 metres above the Bridle Track campsite.

At the turn of the 20th century, this business employed up to 200 miners and associated back-up personnel, all living locally in bark huts. It was very difficult to transport the ore out of the valley, so a decision was made to try to smelt it on site. Local timber fired the kilns and the finished ingots were to be transported over the river on one of the longest dual-haulage systems in the southern hemisphere at that time. Silver, gold, copper, tin, lead and zinc were mined. It is not surprising that, despite a variety of kiln configurations, the temperatures never

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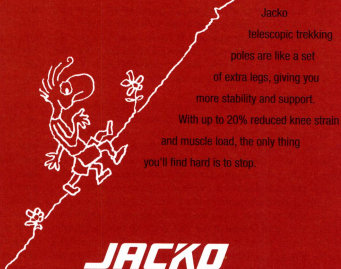
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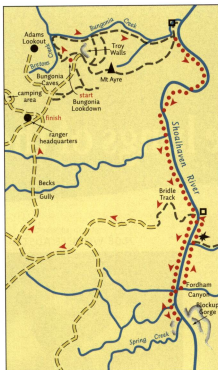
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reached those required to smelt ore properly. Over a period of time the mine faded into oblivion. It now provides a lovely example of how nature can take back its own—the infrastructure has slowly crumbled and the ghosts have returned, or so it seems on a dark night.

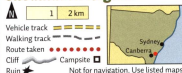
There are many beautiful campsites by the river as you near Blockup Gorge. Inspect the waterfall at the bottom of Spring Creek at the entrance to Blockup Gorge. This was a canyons' paradise until NPWS closed the vehicle track and the canyon due to rockfalls. Much of the area is loose and shaly underfoot, so take care.

You have now reached the furthest point of this walk. You may decide to tackle the Blockup Gorge, which entails a half kilometre swim, but unless you have other plans it is best to lie back and enjoy the day. There is a lovely jumping rock downstream from the confluence of Spring Creek and the Shoalhaven, but make sure that you carefully check the water depth first.

While returning to camp from this excursion, you may wish to cross the river at GR 2914020



The Bungonia and Shoalhaven Region



inspect the spectacular Fordham Canyon and the Tolwong mine site, crossing back above the Bridle Track campsite.

Day three

What goes up must come down...Return to the Bridle Track, marked with blue flashings, and climb for about one and a half kilometres to the four-wheel-drive 'Trestle Track'. This area is being regenerated. From here you can admire the view back to the Blockup Gorge and think

about the work needed to build a haulage system—like a giant flying fox—down to the river, perhaps even wishing that it was still there and you were on it!

If you are really organised and have a good four-wheel-drive vehicle, you can do a car shuttle to this point. (As you drive into the Bungonia region, there is a farm gate on the



Old tramway being reclaimed by the bush at the long derelict Tolwong mine.

right about two kilometres before the ranger station that leads to this rough track.) Otherwise, the walking along the four-wheel-drive track is quite pleasant (although still steeply uphill!) through dry forest, often full of lyrebird song.

Ignore two turnings to the left. After four kilometres, negotiate the locked gate on the right (GR 258412) and take the four-wheel-drive track which crosses Becks Gully. This will return you to the ranger station, the end of the walk. 🐾

John Wilde has spent many happy days exploring the Bungonia and Shoalhaven gorges, usually with adventurous students in tow. It is one of his favourite places.

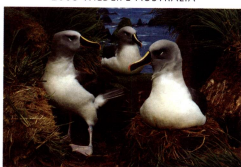


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Top: Old-growth forests act as giant carbon banks, storing carbon safely out of the atmosphere. Protecting our forests will help future generations by reducing dangerous climate change.

Photo: Geoff Law



The **pulp mill debacle** continues

Vica Bayley explains how the project would turn our valuable carbon stores (otherwise known as forests) into smokestacks



The Federal Government recently gave the green light to the Gunns pulp mill project in the Tamar Valley despite serious scientific questions remaining unanswered. Various environmental, social and economic impacts of the project have not been assessed, including the massive impact that logging native forests for feeding to the mill would have on climate change.

However, the fight to stop the mill is far from over; community solidarity remains strong and opposition continues to grow. There is very strong community resolve to continue the campaign to protect Tasmania from Gunns polluting pulp mill. It must be remembered that both the Franklin Dam and the Wesley Vale Pulp Mill campaigns appeared lost, with construction beginning on the projects, before common sense prevailed and they were stopped by public protest.

The entire pulp mill debacle has been one of shifted goalposts, broken promises and watered-down conditions. The mill was to have been totally free of chlorine, reliant on plantation trees, assessed by the Resource Planning & Development Commission (RPDC) and compliant with the RPDC's Final Scope guidelines. Instead it has become a chlorine-bleaching mill that is heavily reliant on native forests, assessed through a fragmented hotchpotch of state and federal processes that ignore crucial community concerns and use the wrong guidelines, with construction of the mill allowed before the scientific investigation is complete.

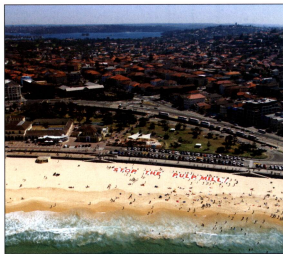
One of the most glaring failures of the mill's assessment is the lack of estimation of the impact it would have on climate change. While Labor and Liberal haggle over who leads the world in policies to combat climate change, they both support a pulp mill development projected to emit at least two per cent of Australia's annual greenhouse gas emissions for decades to come.

Logging causes climate change, and in consuming vast areas of unprotected native forest, the pulp mill would release massive amounts of stored carbon as emissions. Conservative estimates suggest that feeding the pulp mill would emit more than ten million tonnes of CO₂ each year, equivalent to putting an extra 2.3 million cars on the road annually.

The Stern report on climate change states: 'Curbing deforestation is a highly cost-effective way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Action to preserve the remaining areas of natural forest is needed urgently.'

In order to reduce emissions and gain climate change credibility, political parties need to address the logging of Tasmania's carbon-dense forests. Protecting existing forests is the logical first step. However, building a pulp mill could slam the door on this option and wed us to a future of excessive logging and carbon emissions.

Meanwhile the ANZ has recently extended a \$1.5 billion line of credit for Gunns to finance its logging operations. The bank is yet to announce whether it will lend Gunns more money to build the pulp mill.



From Sydney's Bondi Beach (above) to Tasmania's Low Head (top) the message is clear: the pulp mill must be stopped. (Photo above James Atcock; top photo Rob Blakers)

Act now

Contact your local ANZ branch and let them know you are opposed to their investment in forest destruction and climate change. Call the bank on 1800 805 154 or email yourfeedback@anz.com Visit www.wilderness.org.au for more details.

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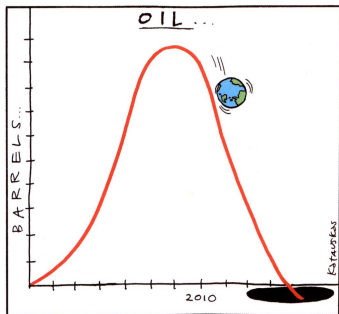


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The plight of the **red gums**



A forest protester, suspended by a cable from logging equipment, and the protest camp in Moira State Forest near Deniliquin. Logging was interrupted for four days until Forests NSW agreed to withdraw from the disputed compartment. *Red Gum Forest Action*

Court cases and science provide some hope: now to the politicians to decide the forests' fate

Andrew Cox reports that more than a decade of illegal logging of red-gum forests in New South Wales was exposed in October when the NSW Government agreed to settle a legal challenge brought by National Parks Association (NPA) of NSW. The NPA legal challenge was based on the fact that the government forestry agency had never produced an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the effects of red-gum logging, even though under NSW planning laws such statements are required for any activity likely to have a significant environmental impact.

The legal settlement includes an agreement by the forestry agency to complete an EIS by June 2009. Until it is prepared, the agency must stop logging in the 11 compartments subject to the court case, avoid logging in other high-

conservation-value areas, and reduce the intensity and scale of patch-clear-felling and increase the retention of large trees in logged areas.

The situation intensified in late September when protesters occupied a compartment of the Barmah-Millewa forest. Logging had begun in this compartment, which was one of the subjects of the court case. Protesters from the new NSW Red Gum Forest Action group climbed a large red gum earmarked for logging and chained themselves to logging machinery.

This shocking exposé of red-gum forest management has only heightened the urgent need for large new red-gum reserves along the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers. The EIS will finally put logging on a more lawful footing, but it will not deliver any permanent protection for red-gum forests.

There aren't any red-gum national parks along the NSW side of the Murray River at present, and the Riverina bioregion is among the

most poorly reserved in the country. Environmental groups are calling for the NSW Government to commit to a rapid process to create new reserves in the region and restructure the logging industry while respecting the rights and interests of traditional owners.

Meanwhile, across the border submissions to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) closed on 8 October, with the Victorian Government expected to make a decision in early 2008. Draft proposals included the establishment of five new national parks along the Murray and its tributaries; exclusion of grazing, and reduction in logging by 70 per cent; and environmental flows of 4000 gigalitres for the Murray River every five years (see *Wild* no 106). However, in late September Victorian Premier John Brumby said that any water recommendations in VEAC's draft report would be 'emphatically rejected', pre-empting the independent panel's findings.

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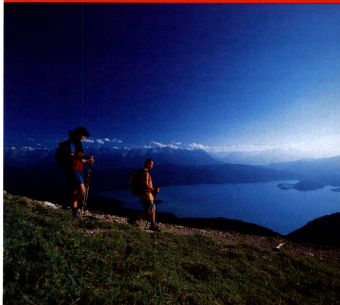


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Cape York Peninsula, a **future** World Heritage Area?

Lucinda Douglass outlines the path to World Heritage listing for the magnificent north

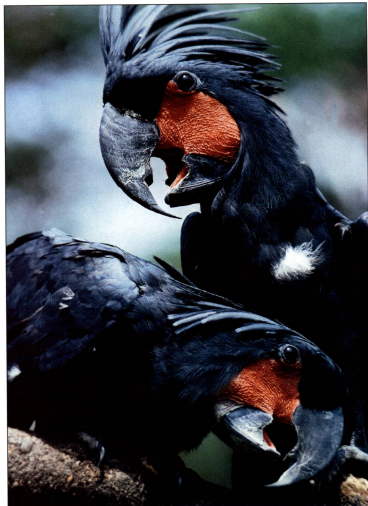
Cape York Peninsula is one of the last great wild places on earth, teeming with magnificent wild rivers, diverse and unique wildlife and the best tropical savannah in the world. Cape York's extraordinary conservation values place it in line with regions such as the Amazon for World Heritage protection.

The conservation of this rich tropical landscape recently drew closer with the introduction of the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Bill 2007 (CYHB) into the Queensland Parliament in June. The legislation outlines a series of steps to identify and protect the region's World Heritage values. It also facilitates the protection of Cape York's wild rivers and the provision of indigenous Wild River rangers, and guarantees the shared management of national parks by traditional owners and the Queensland National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS).

Although the Bill provides a new cooperative framework for land management, conservation outcomes and indigenous development opportunities, the final protection of the wild rivers and World Heritage values of Cape York still requires goodwill, support and hard work. This is especially important as the debate regarding large-scale agricultural development of northern Australia ramps up.

If we don't wish to repeat the mistakes of southern Australia and allow our tropical rivers to become as degraded as the Murray-Darling, then we need a new approach for northern Australia with river protection and a conservation economy.

Palm cockatoos, found only on Cape York Peninsula and in Papua New Guinea. Clifford and Dawn Frith collection



Act now

Show your support for the protection of Cape York Peninsula by signing the cyber action at www.wilderness.org.au/capeyork

The Wielangta case: the Federal Court appeal

Helen Gee reports on Bob Brown's historic test of the veracity of Australia's environmental law

Senator Bob Brown went out on a (legal) limb to protect rare Australian species in Tasmania, taking Forestry Tasmania to court for failing to protect three endangered species found in Wielangta State Forest. In December 2006, the Federal Court's Justice Marshall decided the logging was unlawful because of its impact on these species. (See Green Pages in *Wild* no 104 for more details.) On 23 February, the Tasmanian and Federal Governments changed the law (contained in the Regional Forest Agreement or RFA) to read

that the Comprehensive & Representative Reserve system and associated management prescriptions in Tasmania do protect rare and threatened species. At the same time, Forestry Tasmania appealed the Federal Court judgement.

The hearing of the appeal took place over five days from 13 August 2007. Submissions were filed by Forestry Tasmania, Brown's team and two interveners—the Commonwealth and the State of Tasmania—both of whom were supporting Forestry Tasmania.

Forestry Tasmania has appealed against practically the entire judgement, covering matters of both fact and law. Brown's legal team cast fresh doubt on the validity of Tas-

mania's current RFA, arguing that the changes reduce Tasmania's obligations to protect threatened species and that the environmental implications should have been assessed. The decision was reserved and is expected later in the year. In the meantime, Wielangta stays protected.

Forestry Tasmania was given until 17 September to make written submissions on the question of whether the new RFA is a RFA. (If it is not, logging which might affect threatened species would need to be referred to the Commonwealth Environment Minister for approval.) The legal submissions pertaining to the case can be found at www.on-trial.info



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A Kimberley crusader

A brief profile of Maria Mann, the 2007 Wild Environmentalist of the Year



Maria Mann has co-ordinated efforts to save the nature of the Kimberleys for more than 11 years, in the process putting Environs Kimberley (EK) on the map as the area's peak non-government organisation. Maria has been involved with the community environmental organisation since it was formed, initially as a volunteer. She took upon herself the essential administration and management role, procured an office and basic equipment for EK, and was the organisation's first secretary.

She led EK's first and longest-lasting campaign, to 'keep the Fitzroy River flowing free', against proposals to dam the river and transfer its water to Perth. In 2006, the Western Australian Government finally rejected the proposals and EK celebrated victory. Maria's level-headedness and strategic sense were major assets contributing to EK's success. Her ability to multi-task is phenomenal, and she championed numerous other regional causes simultaneously. Maria is also a gifted photographer.

Maria's organisational and creative efforts have resulted in the following major campaign successes:

- Saving the Fitzroy River as a free-flowing waterway.
- Stopping the proposal to clear 225 000 hectares of land for broad-scale irrigated agriculture.
- The withdrawal of a kaolin-mining proposal for a sensitive intertidal zone on Thangoo pastoral lease.
- The application of stringent conditions for a proposed tropical timber plantation near Beagle Bay on the Dampier Peninsula, which resulted in the project's withdrawal.
- Significantly increased local awareness of the importance of the rich fauna of our intertidal flats for numerous migratory bird species.
- Under Maria's management, EK has driven and/or engaged in a large number of hands-on monitoring surveys of migratory birds, nesting turtles and crab populations, and sea-grass beds.

Without Maria Mann's direction and tireless efforts, none of these things would have been achieved and the Kimberley would be a very different place today.

Despite these successes, the Kimberley is faced with more serious threats than ever before. If the current proposals for liquid natural gas plants, bauxite mines and an alumina smelter go ahead, there will be fast-track industrialisation of the hitherto almost pristine coast and hinterland. For more information about EK's work, visit www.environskimberley.org.au

Fire management off the rails?



Between Lorne and Forrest, wet forests with rainforest understorey are marked for burning early next year. In the foreground, the understorey has already been mulched as a firebreak. *Jenny Barnett*

Climate-induced fires across Victoria have understandably put fear into regional communities, and managers of public land. But are they over-reacting? *Jenny Barnett and Phil Ingamells report*

There have been significant burns in Victoria during the last few years, including Mt Buffalo, Wilsons Promontory, Brisbane Ranges, the Grampians and Alpine national parks. The 2003 fire alone burnt about 470 000 hectares of national park and 507 000 hectares of state forest, while the 2006–2007 fires burnt approximately 1 200 000 hectares. Fire occurrence is now running at well above the 30-year average, without signs of relief.

Unfortunately, the reaction of Victoria's land managers has been to jettison existing fire strategies and engage in a series of knee-jerk reactions that pay little heed to biodiversity protection. In East Gippsland, areas of tens of thousands of hectares each are marked for broad-scale controlled burns within a few years of each other, potentially replicating the ecological problems of recent large-scale fires. Many 'Zone 5' (Prescribed Burning Exclusion Zone) areas across Victoria, including wet forest and rainforest areas not adapted to fire, have appeared in controlled burn proposals. So

have 12 of Victoria's 20 Wilderness Areas, even though they are mostly isolated and of little strategic significance. Sizeable re-burns planned for areas burnt in the 2003 fire are likely to cause a number of significant, long-lasting ecological changes. Hundreds of kilometres of questionable 'strategic' firebreaks are planned, or have already been constructed, before assessment under the Federal Environment & Biodiversity Protection Act.

Fires have been part of the Australian landscape for the last 50 million years, governing the evolution of our flora and fauna. But with an alarming future of more frequent and severe fires, we shall have to learn new strategies, especially as the landscape is already severely compromised by weed and feral animal invasion, and facing a range of climate-induced stresses.

Land managers should be actively seeking the very best scientific advice and setting up a comprehensive program of ecological monitoring across the landscape, building our knowledge of the effects of different burn regimes in different plant communities. That knowledge can help us both now and in the future, when we are likely to face even greater threats. Our land managers must act for community safety, but they shouldn't indulge in careless, knee-jerk reactions that may permanently compromise natural systems.



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Pangea Backpack **\$299.95**

- Hybrid design offers top loading or front loading
- Rucksack hood pocket
- 360 degree daypack, attachment zip adds strength
- Twin compartment for easy access and separation

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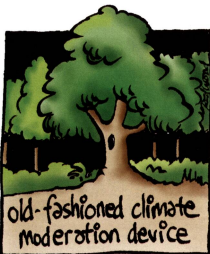
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Photo: Mike Groves

Forests: our last chance for mitigating climate chaos

Walter Jehne elaborates

Our world leaders are promoting everything from new light globes to nuclear power and 'clean coal' as 'solutions' to global warming. But looked at from an ecological perspective, restoring natural forests—those amazing carbon soaks, cloud- and rainmakers—may now be our only option for avoiding climate meltdown.



Removing more than three-quarters of the earth's original forests over past millennia has changed not just the carbon make-up of the planet but also its water and heat dynamics. While to date humans have sent up in smoke some 300 billion tonnes of the planet's fossil carbon stores, deforestation and associated land degradation may have released an additional 3000 billion tonnes generally overlooked.

These original forests biosequestered (or fixed) about 300 billion tonnes a year. As such, restoring just five per cent of our original forest cover could begin to absorb some 15 billion tonnes a year, twice what we are releasing from fossil fuels annually. This would enable us to start paying back our historical carbon debt and rebuilding critical biosystems.

Forests are also directly responsible for much of the world's transpiration of water and nuclei into the atmosphere. Clouds normally reflect more than 30 per cent of the earth's solar radiation back out to space. By creating denser clouds, we can enhance this reflection and reduce temperatures. Unlike other plans, enhancing cloud cooling through strategic reforestation is completely natural and safe and can be effective within days rather than centuries. The science behind this option is not in dispute. And its message is simple: the restoration of forest ecosystems and their soils, clouds and water dynamics may be our only chance to mitigate global warming in time. More information can be found at www.natsoc.org.au/BiologyGW.html

Woodchips



As part of the celebrations marking the 75th anniversary of protection for the Blue Gum Forest, the original 1932 camp was recreated. Andrew Cox

NSW park celebrations

Andrew Cox reports that there was a fortnight of celebrations in October marking the creation of the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) on 1 October 1967. This was the date when the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Act became law, bringing together 12 existing national parks and establishing their management by dedicated government professionals. The creation of the NSW NPWS was the result of relentless pressure from conservation groups and the community since the 1930s, culminating in a targeted campaign by the NSW NPA, formed specifically for that purpose in 1957.

Celebrations were held round the state, including a free-entry day and joint celebrations with the NSW NPA, marking its 50-year anniversary. For more information, see www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/npws.nsf/Content/npws.40th.anniversary

On 2 September a special celebration was held to mark the 75th anniversary of the protection of the Blue Gum Forest in the Blue Mountains. Bushwalkers bought the forest, saving it from the axe, and the area went on to form the nucleus of the present Great Blue Mountains National Park. The area has been closed since summer, so the celebrations were a specially organised chance to visit the recently burnt forest.

Our forests = their profits

Taxpayers are paying \$3.5 million a year to have native forests from the south coast of NSW turned into woodchips. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on 1 October 2007 that figures released under a Freedom of Information application showed that in 2005–2006 supplying the Eden chip mill with native forests for pulping cost the government \$3.5 million, with the wood sold for between \$6.90

and \$16 a tonne. The combined NSW and Victorian subsidies to the mill are estimated at \$9 million annually.

Smarter choices: green paper, and power

Luke Chamberlain reports that paper use is one of the greatest drivers behind deforestation worldwide. Woodchipping destroys old growth forests and degrades water catchments, pollutes our rivers, reduces our water supplies and adds to climate change. One of the easiest ways to reduce our impacts on forests is to buy recycled papers for our offices and homes. A new paper brochure, published by The Wilderness Society, lists office papers made from 100 per cent post-consumer recycled waste. To get a copy of this brochure, download it from www.wilderness.org.au/paper or contact TWS on (03) 9038 0812.

Interested in going green? The recently released Green Electricity Watch 2007 is an independent review of GreenPower products to help consumers to make more informed choices about buying green electricity. For the first time, the survey also shows the price difference for various options. To view the findings, go to www.greenelectricitywatch.org.au

Weeds are nationally significant

In August the Federal Government announced \$3.9 million of funding for 38 new projects to tackle 'Weeds of National Significance'. The projects aim to tackle weeds such as bone-seed, bridal creeper, rubber vine and lantana in sites across Australia. 

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

TO: MARKETING DEPARTMENT
FROM: PACK DESIGN
RE: ADVERTISING

ONE PLANET

HEY GUYS, WE WANT YOU TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE MAGAZINE ADS! CUT THE TOUCHY FEELY STUFF! WE NEED TO SHOW HARD FACTS! ADS MUST POINT OUT THE KEY FEATURES OF OUR BUSHWALKING PACKS, MANY NOT OFFERED BY OTHERS.

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SO YOU CAN SEE WHAT'S
AT THE BOTTOM.

DUAL COMPARTMENT
PACKS HAVE A 'NO ZIP'
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1000 DENIER NYLON OVER CANVAS ON WEAR
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OH, DON'T FORGET

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CO₂ NEUTRAL FACTORY.

To: Pack Design
Stick to what
you're good at...
From: Marketing

My partner and I

Zac Zaharias surveys the latest bushwalking packs

Wild Gear Surveys: what they are and what they're not

The purpose of Wild Gear Surveys is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of *Wild*, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. Wild Gear Surveys summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveyors are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by *Wild*'s editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor, the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.



Exhausted bushwalkers use their trusty friends for support on the dunes behind Ninety Mile Beach, Victoria. *Greg Caire.* Below, the Wilderness Equipment Freycinet is a tough canvas number.

A PACK IS ARGUABLY THE BUSHWALKER'S most crucial piece of equipment for overnight excursions. It carries all the essentials for survival and enjoyment of the outdoors. It is our constant companion, hugging our bodies for hours, if not days. In an emergency we can sleep in it like a bivvy bag or use it as a pillow. We labour under its weight, and it is often cursed, but we would never give it up—it's too essential.

This survey focuses on packs for bushwalking, from weekend trips to extended journeys. All models surveyed are available in most specialist outdoors shops in Australia.

Best suited for

Whilst this survey focuses primarily on bushwalking, packs are used for everything from carrying your personal belongings on a backpacking adventure across Europe to mountaineering in the Himalayas or thrashing through the scrub in South-west Tasmania. Given the mind-boggling range of packs available on the market, it is important to narrow down your choices. The most important criterion should be the intended use of your pack. To help you choose, packs in the survey have been categorised by their capacity to support trip lengths from weekend bushwalks (W; smaller than 70 litres), up to five-day adventures (E; 70–85 litres), and extended walks beyond five days (E+; 85 litres),

Buy right

- Be clear about the intended use of your pack. Do you need a lightweight pack for on-track walking in Europe, or a heavy-duty pack to handle thick scrub and harsh environments? Any extra features on a pack come with a cost in weight and dollars so think through what you will be using it for.
- Try as many packs as you can from a range of retailers. The packs should be loaded up so you can feel the weight being transferred on to your body.
- Select a pack that suits your body frame and ensure that the harness is correctly adjusted.
- Women should consider trying both women-specific and regular packs to see what feels good. This opens up a bigger range of packs for women than that available for men, so it is worth trying the field.
- Use the volume of a pack as a guide for narrowing your choices in the first instance. However, selecting a larger volume pack is not always the best solution if you are going on long walks, as there is always a tendency to fill it—select the smallest possible pack that you can get away with.



Rucksacks for bushwalking

	Best suited for	Volume, litres	Weight, grams	Back lengths available	Main material	Internal compartments	Harness	Durability	Water resistance	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$
Berghaus China www.berghaus.com												
Antaeus 65	WE	65 (+10)	2500	S-L	Synthetic	2	●●	●●	●●	●●●	Side expansion pockets; hydration port	230
C71	WE	65 (+10)	2220	S-L	Synthetic	2	●● ^{1/2}	●●	●●	●● ^{1/2}	As above; rain cover	330
Black Wolf China www.blackwolf.com.au												
Mountain Ash	WE/E+	45-85	1800	S-L	Synthetic	2	● ^{1/2}	●●	●●	●●●	Available in five sizes; rain cover; hydration port	160
McKinley	WE/E+	55-85	2000	S-L	Synthetic	2	●●	●●	●●	●●●	Side pockets; hydration port	200
Bugaboo	WE	60-70 (+10)	2800	S-L	Synthetic	2	●● ^{1/2}	●●	●●	●● ^{1/2}	Ten litre lid extension; built-in rain cover	220
Kathmandu Vietnam www.kathmandu.com.au												
Extrados	W	50-55	1750	M, L	Synthetic	1	●●	●●●	●●●	●● ^{1/2}		300
Vanguard	WE	55-65	2100	S, M, L	Synthetic	1	●●●	●●●	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	Removable lid; stash panel for tools and crampons	470
Vardo	E	65-75	2080	S, M, L	Synthetic	2	●●●	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	●● ^{1/2}	Removable lid; front pocket with water-resistant zip	520
Low Alpine Vietnam www.lowalpine.com												
Appalachian	E	60-70 (+15)	2480	S-L	Synthetic	2	●●	●●●	●●	●●●	Slim profile; rain cover	380
TFX Summit	E	65 (+15)	3260	W, S-L	Synthetic	2	●●●	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	Extendable and removable lid; harness GPS pocket	500
Expedition	E+	65-75 (+20)	3030	W, S-L	Synthetic	2	●●●	●●●	●●	●●●	As above; front opening panel; rain cover	520
Macpac Philippines www.macpac.co.nz												
Torlesse 75	WE	70-80	2850	M, L, XL	Synthetic	2	●●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●●●	●●●●	Front, bottom and top access; side water-bottle pockets; back reinforced storage panel; ice-axe loops; hydration port	400
Ascent XPD	E+	75-80	2500	M, L	Canvas	1	●●● ^{1/2}	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	Ideal for mountaineering; extendable and removable lid; 2.5 litre platypus water bladder provided	500
Cascade 75	E+	75-85	3150	M, L, XL	Canvas	2	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	New and comfortable harness designed to carry heavy loads; generous pockets; adjustable lid extension; hydration port	600
Mont China www.mont.com.au												
Flyte	E	65-75	2600	S, M, L	Canvas	1	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●● ^{1/2}	Simple, robust pack designed for institutional and school use; front zip access; synthetic version available	270
Alpha	E+	80	2800	W, M, L	Synthetic	2	●●●	●●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●●●	A synthetic version of the Backcountry pack; front access	470
Backcountry	E+	80-85	2850	W, M, L	Canvas	2	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Ideal for multiday walks and ski tours; front access	470
Mountain Designs Vietnam www.mountaindesigns.com												
Boreus	W	50	1500	Fixed	Synthetic	2	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	Front pocket with water-resistant zip	220
Tellus	E	60-70	2700	S-L	Synthetic	2	●● ^{1/2}	●●●	●●●	●●●	Front pocket	240
Terra	E	65-75	2700	S-L	Synthetic	2	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Water-resistant zips; front pocket	330

giving a useful starting point for pack selection. You also need to consider the conditions in which you intend to use the pack. Does it need to be tough enough to be dragged up cliff-faces or used in extreme climatic conditions? Perhaps a streamlined and simple pack for moving through tight scrub is needed? If you are doing side trips, the ability to remove the top and use it as a day pack may appeal to you, or perhaps the inbuilt rain cover, many stash pockets and dual compartments for organising your gear. The 'Buy right' box gives further information about other things to consider when buying a rucksack.

Volume

The volume is measured in litres and was provided by the manufacturers. Volume is difficult to compare directly as there isn't an universal standard: different manufacturers calculate this in different ways. The capacity of packs is best checked by stuffing them with gear. Larger volume packs allow you to carry more gear, but also remember the old adage: 'You will always fill a pack to the space that is available.' Disciplined selection of what to take is more important than just selecting a pack on its capacity alone.

Weight

The weight was also provided by manufacturers and, unless identified otherwise, is for the smallest size listed in the range of packs available. Pack weights in this survey vary from 1380 to 3700 grams. Whilst I am an advocate for the 'lightweight brigade' when it comes to bushwalking, you need to look carefully at the features of the pack first and analyse where the weight comes from, rather than rejecting heavier packs out of hand. Quality harnesses are heavier but will be far more comfortable than scrimping on weight for marginal savings of weight or dollars. All the additional features that seem to be appearing on packs—GPS pouches, multiple zip access, foam padding and extra reinforcing—add to the overall weight. If you are on a tight budget it may be better to spend money on a quality harness rather than on more volume.

Back lengths available

Fitting a pack to your body correctly is critical for ensuring optimal weight distribution and comfort. Nearly all packs come with some form of adjustment, the simplest being a single pack size with fixed tabs on the harness to allow

incremental changes. Better-quality packs come in multiple sizes to suit different body and back lengths, and provide finer adjustment. Some harnesses fit particular body shapes better than others, so it is important to try on a range of packs and brands to find one that suits you. A sales person who knows what they are doing can make a big difference.

Main material

The main materials used in packs are canvas and synthetic. A blend of hard-wearing cottons and rot-resistant polyester yarn, canvas is a traditional material that is highly regarded for its water resistance and durability. Waterproofing is achieved by saturating the canvas in resins and waxes, and is further enhanced by the swelling of the cotton fibres when wet, thereby filling up air spaces. Australia is a world leader in the production of canvas, giving Australasian designed and sourced packs an edge over their competitors. Canvas is more expensive and heavier (especially when wet). North American and European manufacturers generally prefer synthetic fibres because of their durability, strength and lightness. Consumers are choosing synthetics for backpacking holidays, on-track walking and other similar,

Rucksacks for bushwalking continued

	Best suited for	Volume, litres	Weight, grams	Back lengths available	Main material	Internal compartments	Harness	Durability	Water resistance	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$
One Planet Australia www.adventureone.com.au												
WBA	W/E	55-65	2000 (M)	WS, WM, M, L	Canvas	1	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●●	A durable, lightweight pack	300
Styx 2	E	65-75	2800 (M)	WS, WM, M, L	Canvas	2	●●●1/2	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	Harness endorsed by Chiropractors' Association	390
Strelzecki	E+	75-85	3000 (M)	WS, WM, M, L	Canvas	2	●●●1/2	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	As above; dual compartments; storage pocket at back	500
Osprey Vietnam www.ospreypacks.com												
Atmos	W	35-50	1380 (50 L)	W, S, M, L	Synthetic	1	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	Aura is the women's model	330
Aether	W/E+	60-85	2070 (70 L)	WS, WM, M, L	Synthetic	2	●●●●	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	Individually heat-moulded hip-belt; 60 litre pack has one compartment	450
Crescent	E+	70-110	3200 (85 L)	WXS, WS, WM, M, L, XL	Synthetic	2	●●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Women's pack is the Luna; individually heat-moulded hip-belt	650
Oztrail China www.oztrail.com.au ¶												
Outer Limits Ridge	W/E	65-75	2250	S-L	Synthetic	2	●1/2	●1/2	●●	●●1/2	Designed for school and institutional use; rain cover	140
Tatonka Vietnam www.tatonka.com												
Yellowstone	E	60-70	1650	S-L	Synthetic	2	●	●●	●	●●1/2		150
Yukon	E	70	3020	S-L	Synthetic	2	●●	●●●	●●	●●	Mesh side pockets; front expansion pocket	300
Vango China www.vango.co.uk ¶												
Contour	W/E+	50-80 (+10)	1650	S-L	Synthetic	2	●	●●	●●	●●	Two expansion pockets	105
Sherpa	W	60 (+10)	2200	S-L	Synthetic	2	●1/2	●●	●●	●●	Two expansion pockets; detachable rain cover	130
Fitzroy	E	70 (+10)	2500	S-L	Synthetic	2	●●	●●	●●	●●1/2	As above	270
Vaude Germany/China www.vaude.de ¶												
Tour 50	W	50	1500	S-L	Synthetic	2	●	●●	●●	●●	Rain cover; waterproof map case	150
Astra	W/E	55-65 (+10)	2200	W, S-L	Synthetic	2	●●	●●	●●	●●	As above; two side expansion pockets	220
Profile 70	W/E	70	2850	W, S-L	Synthetic	2	●●1/2	●●	●●	●●	Expansion pockets; water-resistant zips; rain cover; harness requires screwdriver for adjustment	300
Wilderness Equipment Vietnam www.seatosummit.com.au												
Mountain Expedition	E+	95-105	3200 (L)	XS, S, M, L	Synthetic	1	●●●1/2	●●●●	●●●	●●●●	Swivelling hip-belt; long expansion sleeve; side access; water-resistant zips	350
Freyfennel	E	70-80	3200 (L)	XS, S, M, L	Canvas	2	●●●1/2	●●●●	●●●1/2	●●●●	Swivelling hip-belt; detachable top converts to a waist pack	440
Lost World	E+	95-105	3700 (L)	XS, S, M, L	Canvas	1	●●●1/2	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	As above; excellent for extended back-country trips and mountaineering; long expansion sleeve	480
● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Best suited for: Extended walks of up to five days, E+ extended walks of more than five days, Weekend trips Volume: where more than one size of a model is available, the smallest and largest rucksack volume is given. Figures in brackets are the extra capacity of a fully extended pack Weight: if not identified, is for the smallest size available. Back lengths available: all the packs surveyed allow for adjustments to the back length of the harness. S-L indicates one adjustable harness size ranging from small to large, Medium, Women's size, WM women's medium, WS women's small, WXS women's extra small, XL extra large, XS extra small ¶ not seen by referee The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made												

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent **Best suited for:** Extended walks of up to five days; **E+** extended walks of more than five days; **Weekend trips** **Volume:** where more than one size of a model is available, the smallest and largest rucksack volume is given. Figures in brackets are the extra capacity of a fully extended pack. **Weights:** if not identified, is for the smallest size available. **Back lengths available:** all the packs surveyed allow for adjustments to the back length of the harness. **S-L** indicates one adjustable harness size ranging from small to large, **Medium**, **Women's** size, **WM** women's medium, **WS** women's small, **WXS** women's extra small, **XL** extra large, **XS** extra small ¶ not seen by referee The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

less-demanding environments than those encountered during the traditional pursuits of 'bush bashing' and climbing.

The main synthetic fibres used in rucksacks are nylon and polyester-based fabrics. These fibres are waterproofed with a coated laminate, usually polyurethane. Ripstop is a common process where an additional nylon cord is woven into a grid pattern across the fabric to improve strength and durability. Manufacturers often experiment with different synthetic materials such as Kevlar and other waterproof laminates. Synthetic materials are lighter and more abrasion resistant than canvas. The disadvantage of synthetic fibres is that once the waterproofing laminate is worn, the packs will have poor water resistance. This can be overcome through the use of pack covers and/or waterproof pack liners, although these do increase the weight of your rucksack on the track and are an extra expense.

Manufacturers will often use different fabrics and fabric thicknesses on a pack. Many canvas packs incorporate Cordura or other synthetic fabrics on the base. Heavy-wear areas can be reinforced with heavier grade synthetic materials without excessively increasing the weight of a pack.



The Berghaus C71 (left) and Macpac Torlesse 75 (right).

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Harnesses

Good harness design is the key to a comfortable and long-wearing pack. The purpose of a harness is to distribute the load around the parts of the body that are best able to manage the load, namely your hips, shoulders and lower back. When you wear a heavy pack, the weight pulls you backward and changes your balance point. To counter this pull, you lean forward to correct your centre of balance. This forward-leaning posture changes the curvature of the spine from an S position to an inefficient crane-like shape. This posture is not only uncomfortable, but stresses the shoulders and spine and makes it harder to balance.

Packs that are designed to carry 20 kilograms or more use frame bars, usually made of aluminium, to move the weight from the top of the pack to the base of your spine, where in turn the weight is dispersed through the entire hip area via the hip-belt. This allows you to stand more upright and better balanced, placing less stress on your spine. To improve comfort and weight distribution, some pack manufacturers include lumbar pads, usually constructed of thick, high-density foam.

Hip-belts are also stiffened and padded with dense foam or other materials. They are designed to spread the load across the hips evenly without creating pressure points while allowing maximum freedom of movement. Some hip-belts are quite broad and utilise dual tensioning straps from the hip-belt to the front buckle. Side stabiliser straps are built into most rucksacks, and can be tightened to stabilise heavy loads, or loosened if more freedom of movement is required.

The biggest single difference between most packs is the way the harness is connected to the hip-belt. The simplest packs have the hip-belt stitched straight on to the harness, allowing fewer adjustments. More sophisticated packs have pivoting hip-belts that allow maximum freedom to move by allowing your hips to work independently from your shoulders, your back and the pack. This also helps you to maintain better balance and reduce fatigue. In a sense, it is best to think of pivoting or 'floating' hip-belts like a suspension system in your car. You can ride the bumps out better when walking without the upper part of the pack moving around too much. Every time you move the upper body you stress the shoulders and spine.

The old adage is that you get what you pay for. Better quality harnesses will make load carrying more comfortable and less fatiguing, but they do lead to a heavier pack and a bigger price tag.

Internal compartments

Packs have either single or dual internal compartments, with most packs available now having dual compartments. These have an internal separation flap closed by zip, drawcord or Velcro, which is very handy for organising and accessing gear, although the zip entry means the pack is less waterproof. I prefer a single compartment for simplicity.

Harness

Like all of the ratings, this subjective rating is based on 35 years of experience in a multitude of environments and uses. Harnesses are covered in more detail in the box (left) but the criterion used is based on comfort, fit, strap/buckle ad-



Don't you know red goes faster? The Kathmandu Extrados (left) gloats, while the Lowe Alpine TFX Summit (above) positively glows with envy.

justments and shoulder-straps—all equally weighted. Shoulder-straps should be curved to allow for a snug fit. Harnesses need to be adjustable, with good-quality padding and lumbar support to spread the load and minimise pressure points on the back and shoulders. Hip-belts should be wide enough and stiffened, with no pinching or pressure points when tightened. Specifically designed women's packs are more than just a marketing fad: there are significant differences between men's and women's models. When it comes to load carrying, men prefer to carry their pack higher on the back, while women carry the weight lower through their hips. Women's harnesses have shorter back lengths, narrower neck gaps, and different hip/shoulder ratios. Accordingly, hip-belts are wider and longer, and in some packs more angled, for a snug and comfortable fit. Shoulder-straps are shorter and the pack volume is generally reduced by five to ten litres compared to the men's version.

Durability

Durability relates directly to the quality of the pack material, sewing and general workmanship, thickness and width of straps, strength of the buckles and the quality of the zips used. The use of hardened or reinforced fabrics for hard-wearing areas is also a factor.

Water resistance

None of the packs surveyed are waterproof; however, this rating reflects a mixture of factors that add to water resistance. Canvas is more water-resistant than synthetic fibres. Zip quality and type make a difference, with watertight zips now becoming more prevalent on many packs. Packs with multiple access points via zip or Velcro fastening can reduce water resistance as these areas become ingress points for water. Although many synthetic pack manufacturers provide rain covers as a standard feature, this factor has not been considered when rating water resistance. Users should consider lining their packs with a dry bag if they need total waterproofness.

Value

Value is a subjective assessment that places equal weight on the harness, durability and water resistance, considered against price.

Price

Where there are multiple sizes and volumes of the same model, the price stated is the maximum price. In many cases, smaller-volume packs and smaller sizes are cheaper than the RRP quoted here.

Other brands available

Brand	Distributor	Contact
Aarn	Wildside Design	(03) 5282 5654
Arcteryx	Sea to Summit	(08) 9221 6617
Black Diamond	Sea to Summit	
Deuter	Velo Vita	(02) 9695 7744
DMH	DMH Australia	(02) 9587 9366
Karrimor	Active Planet	(02) 9939 5611
Marmot	LA Imports	(02) 9913 7155
Salewa	Intertrek	(02) 9476 0672
Summit Gear	Summit Gear	(02) 4782 3018
The North Face	True Alliance	(02) 8306 3352

Zac Zaharias has been climbing, skiing, bushwalking and mountaineering for over 30 years and now splits his time between running his consulting business and travelling to many places around the globe to pursue his passions. His most recent treks have been to the Kokoda Track and Bhutan.

This survey was refereed by Alistair McGhie.

KATADYN VARIO



THE WORLD'S FASTEST COMPACT WATER FILTER

The Vario is a premium drinking water system. It combines the benefits of easy operation, high water output and extended cartridge life. The technology that is employed consists of three filtration stages: a high-performance fibreglass filter, a ceramic pre-filter that can be adjusted in line with the level of contamination and active carbon for the elimination of odours. In its "LONGER LIFE" mode the turbid water is first prefiltered through the ceramic disk. When operating in the "FASTER FLOW" mode the water is directed straight to the glassfiber membrane, increasing the water flow to up to 2 litres/minute. This revolutionary ceramic prefilter can increase the capacity of the cartridge up to 2000 litres.



Dual Action

The dual piston mechanism provides continuous water flow for maximum output with minimal effort.



Multi Stage Filtration System

A simple turn engages a ceramic prefilter, as a longer life cleansable dirt shield, and high flow glassfiber, for microbiological filtration, with minimal pump resistance.



Carbon Core

Replaceable activated carbon granulate reduces chemicals and improves taste and odour.



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Drinking it in

Michael Hampton surveys water purifiers and filters for bushwalking

Wild Gear Surveys: what they are and what they're not

(See box on page 71.)

WATER, AND ESPECIALLY THE LACK OF IT, HAS become a hot issue over the past few years. Rucksack enthusiasts need plenty of water, both to prevent dehydration (a major cause of fatigue), and to prepare dehydrated meals. Access to potable water varies throughout our continent, and is certainly unreliable in developing countries, where tourists and locals suffer alike. Water filters and purifiers can give us access to clean, reliable water, often within minutes. A selection of water filters and purifying treatments available in specialist outdoors shops and suitable for bushwalking in Australia and trekking overseas are presented here. For this survey, units have been placed in two tables: table one includes those units that filter water by forcing it through a cartridge or mesh, and in some cases also purify it through chemical or UV treatment. These are the more traditional types of products. Table two shows those that do not filter water, but just purify it through chemical or UV treatment.

Use

Use bushwalking (CB) needs are for less demanding day walks and the odd overnight trip throughout the year. Units suitable for casual travel (CT) will be light, portable and user-friendly, for treating unreliable water sources whilst travelling at home and abroad. Frequent bushwalking (FB) will require a robust and reliable unit that is easy to maintain and has a long cartridge life. Purification and durability are essential in units suitable for sustained travel and trekking (T) overseas.

Top right, the Katadyn Vario uses a multistage filtration system.

Right, the MSR Miniworks EX.

Below, Mya Eastmure ensures that the grizzlies and marmots won't make her sick whilst drinking from mountain streams in the Tombstones, Yukon, Canada. Mathew Farrell

Weight

Weights were supplied by the manufacturers.

Unit type

All units included are claimed to meet US Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) standards. Products are divided by the size of the particle that they will remove, measured in microns.

Micron ratings relate to the size of the pores in the filters: the smaller the number, the smaller the filter's 'holes'. The smaller the holes, the less will slip through, similar to using a net in a pond. Filters (F) have a 1.0–4.0 microbiological micron rating. These eliminate protozoa (see

What is in the water?

Yucky, turbid water is obvious; however, it's the microscopic parasites we can't see that are the problem. Once ingested, they multiply with frightening speed, using our bodies as a host and making us sick—from inconvenient to life-threatening depending on the bug.

Silt and vegetable matter are harmless, but can be hosts to microscopic protozoa, bacteria and viruses, most of which can survive for months in cold water. These can be removed or killed by filtration, exposure to ultraviolet light, boiling and/or chemical treatment (iodine, chlorine). Of protozoa, *Giardia lamblia* is the most notorious. We become infested with giardia by drinking water contaminated by the faeces of an infected animal or person. Giardia is relatively large and easy to filter. Cryptosporidium is a thick-skinned 'wild card', and especially dangerous as traditional chemical treatments (iodine, chlorine) are ineffective. Removal (filtration), or killing the organism (boiling, UV exposure) are the only options. *Entamoeba histolytica* causes amoebic dysentery and is prevalent in developing countries. Bacteria are smaller, requiring finer filtration, and include the infamous *E. coli* and *Salmonella* (typhoid). Viruses are incredibly small, with filters capable of removing viruses such as hepatitis A and B, meningitis and polio needing to be smaller than a minuscule 0.020 microns. Viruses are more likely than bacteria to be found in water, with food also posing a significant risk. Fortunately, boiling, iodine/chlorine, and UV treatment can also kill bacteria and viruses.



'What is in the water?'), as well as sediments and 'floaties'. Microfilters (M) have a micron rating of 0.2 to one, eliminating protozoa and most bacteria, as well as 'floaties' and sediments. Purifiers (P) eliminate viruses, bacteria and protozoa. A filter capable of being a purifier would need a micron rating of 0.004. As this is too fine to be practical, the only filter to be

pump. So manufacturers often include chemical treatments to eliminate the smaller bacteria and viruses, thus 'purifying' the water while allowing easier pumping. Activated carbon eliminates unpleasant tastes, odours and some chemicals such as iodine. However, it's important that carbon filtration doesn't follow immediately after iodine treatment as the chemical needs time—at least ten minutes depending on water temperature and dosage—to kill any bugs.

water Purifier System has an additional chemical purifying solution to protect against bacteria and viruses.

Buy right

- Carefully consider your primary use and needs, and how many people will rely on your filter/purification system.
- Weigh up the whole package. How many spares/batteries need to be carried and how easy are they to obtain away from 'civilisation'? What support do manufacturers provide?
- For extreme and sustained use in the field you may consider both a filter and a purification system.
- Manufacturers' web sites provide comprehensive and graphic information about their products and use. You will also find models that may be suitable for larger groups, car camping and domestic use.



The Steripen Adventurer (left) and MSR MIOX (below) are part of a new, compact breed that purifies the water without

filtering it. Right, the First Need filters are the only models in the survey that are also purifiers. Pictured is the Deluxe.

rated as a purifier is General Ecology's First Need (see table one) which employs additional methods. (It should be pointed out that tiny viruses are likely to be attached to some larger host particle.) The units in table two use chemical or UV treatment to purify the water, but do not filter the water so 'floaties' and sediment will remain.

Preferred number of users

This suggests the ideal number of users for this unit in the field, considering output, cartridge life and intended use.

Filter material

At the core of these units is a thick, dense strainer or depth filter. A hand-pump draws the water up the inlet hose and forces it through the filter. The finer the strainer, the quicker it clogs. This means that microfilters with an absolute pore size (meaning that nothing larger than the quoted size can get through) that are capable of trapping tiny viruses are harder to



Table one

- General Ecology's First Need units employ 'ultrafine microfiltration, molecular sieving and "broad spectrum" adsorption' and 'electrokinetic attraction'. These proprietary cartridges are sealed and cannot be cleaned. General Ecology claim this protects the user from pathogens concentrated on the micro-strainer's outer surface.
- In the past, Katadyn relied on ceramic cartridges, but since taking over another manufacturer some years ago, its range features a mix of ceramic and glass-fibre cartridges. The latter are made of bundles of glass fibre, pleated to offer a larger surface area. Katadyn ceramic cartridges are impregnated with silver that protects the unit against microbiological penetration and contamination. They can be easily removed and scrubbed many times. Glass-fibre filters have a better flow rate but won't withstand vigorous cleaning.
- MSR also offers a combination of ceramic, carbon and glass-fibre filters through its product range. Much of MSR's recent development in this field has been establishing the MIOX units (see following). The MSR Sweet-



Tips for users

- Always use the best water available: minimise the risks, and your filter's workload. Let turbid water stand for as long as possible so that the sediment can settle, and avoid drawing water from sources downstream from farming and urban areas.
- Keep inlet/outlet hoses separate and store them in separate plastic bags or containers. A good procedure is to draw water with a receptacle—a wide-mouth bottle or portable bucket marked as 'untreated'—and move away from the source before doing the pumping.
- Respect all water sources, no matter how scungy. Remember that cleaning your filter in a water source is equivalent to defecating in it: you could be infecting a 'clean' source.
- Before storage, always clean units as per the manufacturer's instructions. This will minimise the chance of micro-organisms growing in the cartridge. After storage, always discard the first litre of water pumped.

Table two

The units in this table are not filters; they treat the water only.

- MSR MIOX units employ mixed-oxidant technology. Developed for the US military, a combination of salt, water and electricity produces a concentrate (chiefly chlorine) that will oxidise protozoa, bacteria and viruses. Each dose will treat up to four litres. MSR suggests wait times of 15 minutes for viruses and bacteria, 30 minutes for giardia and four hours for Cryptosporidium.
 - Also in this non-filter category is the Steripen range. These units use a charge of UV light to kill microbes in the water. Independent tests have shown this method to be particularly effective against thick-skinned Cryptosporidium. However, the water needs to be clear for the UV light to penetrate. Steripen offers an additional Pre-filter to reduce turbidity before dosing (see table one).
- Both MIOX and Steripen use batteries, and Steripen also offers a portable solar battery charger (\$125). The Steripen models and the MIOX are the most compact and portable in this survey.

Pore size

Pore sizes are in microns. These figures were supplied by the manufacturer.

Approximate rate of output

Pumping requires effort. The rate of output is important in regard to the needs of the users and the recommended group size. Water quality will seriously affect the output speed, with the rate quoted here for a functional unit pumping clear water.

Cartridge capacity

Cartridge life will depend on the quality of the water filtered; the manufacturer's recommendation should be considered a maximum. Those units that you can scrub often have a measuring gauge that indicates when the cartridge should be replaced.

Battery type

Availability of batteries might be an issue, especially when travelling in remote locations and developing countries.

Output for battery life

The approximate number of litres treated using one set of batteries, as supplied by the manufacturer. This is based on treating clear water: as with cartridge life, this will be affected by the quality of the water.

Durability

How does robustness stack up against the unit's weight? I also considered the quality of the unit casing and moving parts, and whether any protruding parts might be subjected to additional wear and tear.

Water filters and purifiers for bushwalking: table one

Use	Weight, grams	Unit type	Preferred number of users	Filter material	Pore size, microns	Approx rate of output, litres a minute	Cartridge capacity, litres (maximum)	Cartridge replacement cost, \$	Durability	Portability	Performance	Maintenance	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$	
General Ecology USA www.generalecology.com																
First Need Deluxe	CB, CT	430	P	1-3	Structured matrix	0.4 A	1.7	470	110	●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	This filter purifies to EPA standards without using chemicals; can be gravity-fed if pump breaks	235
First Need Trav-L-Pure	CB, CT	625	P	3	As above	0.4 A	1.25	400	110	●●●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	As above	355
Katadyn Switzerland www.katadyn.com																
Hiker	CB, FB	310	M	2	Pleated glass-fibre with activated carbon	0.3 A	1	750	90	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	User-friendly and popular	170
Vario	FB, T	425	M	3-4	Ceramic prefilter; main filter pleated glass-fibre with activated carbon core	Pre-filter 1.0, main filter 0.3	2 (fast flow); 1 (long life)	400 carbon; 2000 glass-fibre	Prefilter 27; main filter 85	●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●	Double-action pump and three-stage filter make this a logical blend of various filter media	230
Pocket	FB, T	550	M	2	Ceramic	0.2	1	50 000	330	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●	Simple and durable market veteran; 20-year warranty	500
MSR USA www.msrcorp.com																
Sweetwater Purifier System	CT, T	395	M	2	Silica fibre with activated carbon	0.2 A	1.25	750	Cartridge 70; purifier solution 24	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Compact; good flow rate; purifier solution (chlorine) available to supplement filtration	170
Miniworks EX	FB, CT	455	M	2	Ceramic	0.2	1	2000	72	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●●	Durable and easily maintained	190
Steripen China www.steripen.com																
Pre-filter	FB, T	40	F	2-3	Gauze screen	17 *	na	na	10	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Screws on to wide-mouth Nalgene-style water bottles	30

Water purifiers for bushwalking: table two

Use	Weight, grams	Unit type	Preferred number of users	Treatment type	Approx rate of output, litres a minute	Battery type	Battery life capacity, litres (maximum)	Durability	Portability	Performance	Maintenance	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$	
MSR USA www.msrcorp.com															
MIOX	FB, T	100	P	Any	Mixed oxidant	na	Lithium CR123 camera	200	●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●●	Pocket sized; low maintenance; salt replacement packs available for \$40	300
Steripen China www.steripen.com															
Classic	FB, T	215	P	Any	UV	0.6	4 x AA (standard or rechargeable)	100	●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	Original pocket-sized unit with more, larger batteries	200
Traveller	CT	105	P	Any	UV	0.6	2 x CR33 camera (standard or rechargeable)	60-100	●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	Silver casing; optional solar charger/carry case	260
Adventurer	FB, T	105	P	Any	UV	0.6	As above	60-100	●●●	●●●●	●●	●●●●	●●	Durable rubberised body; optional solar charger/carry case	280
● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Use: CB casual bushwalking, CT casual travel, FB frequent bushwalking, Trekking in table two include batteries Unit type: Filter, Microfilter, Purifier Pore size: Absolute pore size * Square aperture equal to 17 square microns Weights were supplied by the manufacturer. All weights listed are approximate. na not applicable The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made															

● poor ●● average ●●●● good ●●●●● excellent **Use:** CB casual bushwalking, CT casual travel, FB frequent bushwalking, Trekking **Weights** were supplied by the manufacturer. All weights listed in table two include batteries **Unit type:** Filter, Microfilter, Purifier **Pore size:** Absolute pore size * Square aperture equal to 17 square microns **na** not applicable **The country** listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

Portability

This is of utmost importance to the bushwalker and traveller. For this subjective rating, shape, weight, size and durability were considered, as were any spare parts (including spare cartridges) that might need to be carried.

Performance

How well does the unit perform for its intended use? Particular attention was paid to flow rates, cartridge/battery life, cost of replacement cartridges, batteries and other required chemicals/solutions.

Maintenance

This rating is based on cleaning and accessibility, availability of parts, and the number of parts that may fail or need routine maintenance.

Value

This subjective rating balances the four criteria above against the recommended retail price.

Other options

The traditional method of making drinking water safe is boiling—and it works. Boiling kills any microscopic nasties; however, it doesn't remove 'floaties' or sediments and chemicals. Boiling has practical limitations: when you're trying to stretch a finite amount of fuel over a period of days there's a limit to how many times you can 'boil the billy'. Travellers and walkers have relied on iodine for years, with Coghlan's Drinking Water Treatment sold in many outdoors shops. Micropur Forte tablets use silver ions and calcium hypochlorite (chlorine). However, chemical treatments only kill the organisms and also have practical limitations.

Depending on the dosage level, iodine needs at least ten minutes to dispatch micro-organisms, and leaves a taste in the water. Chlorine and iodine are both ineffective against thick-skinned Cryptosporidium. Long-term use of iodine to treat drinking water is not recommended, and woman who are pregnant or people with thyroid conditions should not use it at all. These treatments are relatively inexpensive at around \$30 for a packet. **●**

Michael Hampton is a freelance outdoors pursuits instructor, photographer, illustrator and writer. A long-time resident of Murrindindi Shire, north-east of Melbourne, he spends way too much time exploring and climbing in the Grampians on the other side of the state. Michael has also worked as an aquatic-facility operator for the same shire and has recently become the co-owner of 70 hectares of delightful forest in the Strathbogie Ranges.

This survey was refereed by Mathew Farrell.

Mont Krypton Tent



Mont tents are back! After much anticipation,

Mont is releasing an innovative bushwalking tent for the Australian market. The Mont Krypton is a freestanding 3-4 season tent with a unique design that enables the inner and fly to pitch as one. High quality lightweight fabrics such as 30 denier Sil-nylon are used for the fly and inner floor, with 3 DAC featherlite poles that cross over in 4 places creating a superbly stable structure in high winds or driving rain.

The Krypton is packed full of features including dual entrances and vestibules, fully seam sealed fly and tub floor, a practical storage loft and 2 pockets, plenty of venting and elbow room for a good night's sleep — its most impressive characteristic however is its unique sewn-in footprint — a simple but incredibly well thought-out idea.

The footprint not only protects the inner floor from moisture, dirt and abrasion, but also allows the tent to be used as a stand-alone fly with integrated floor for the fast and light enthusiast.

Impressively light, the Krypton is the ideal tent for those looking for a lightweight, versatile and durable shelter designed to withstand the most severe conditions in the Australian bush.

The Krypton is the first product release in our **Mont Advanced Shelter System.**



Features

- Freestanding 3-4 season 2 man tent
- Multi-pitch design
- Inner toggles attach inner and outer tent together
- 3 DAC Featherlite poles crossing over at 4 points for unparalleled rigidity
- Colour coded webbing and poles
- Locking pole ends
- Siliconised nylon on the fly and inner floor
- PU coated integrated sewn in footprint
- Dual vestibules
- Dual vents
- Removable storage loft
- No-See-Um insect mesh
- 4 reflective storm guys

For stockists visit www.mont.com.au

Mont Adventure Equipment — An Australian Company

As easy as breathing?

Just when you thought that breathing was the one thing you didn't have to worry about, along comes **POWERbreathe** to spoil a good metaphor. POWERbreathe is a device that claims to be 'scientifically proven to improve lung muscle strength by up to 45 per cent and lung muscle endurance by 36 per cent, promoting better core



Is that a **POWERbreathe** in your pocket or are you just heavy breathing? **Right**, the **Mont Krypton** is not for supermen.

strength and performance at altitude'. It works on the principle that your breathing is controlled by muscles which can be trained, in the usual way, through resistance exercise. In this case, breathing through the **POWERbreathe** is said to provide the resistance. Apparently all you need to do is breathe 30 breaths through the device twice a day for increased lung function and thus improved bushwalking and mountaineering performance. RRP \$119. For more information, visit www.healthmg.com.au

separately) when out in a boat. The **CrossoverGPS** comes with a 3.5 inch screen, can mark waypoints, keep a breadcrumb trail, save routes and track logs and comes with an eight-hour internal battery. RRP from \$109. Also new from Magellan and **Hema Maps** is the **DiscoverAus Outback Tourer**. This mapping software for outback Australia is claimed to be perfect for that big Australian adventure through the interior, and can be used in conjunction with the **CrossoverGPS**. It includes some of Australia's most famous tracks, such as the Canning Stock Route, the Birdsville, Strzelecki and Oodnadatta Tracks. RRP \$299. For more information about these products, visit www.nextdestination.com.au

Lex Luthor's tent of choice

The new **Mont Krypton** is not the tent for Superman. The rest of us would appreciate its features, which include a siliconised-nylon fly and inner floor, three DAC featherlite poles, two entrances and vestibules, a storage loft



and an integrated footprint, all weighing in at just under three kilograms. The tent can be pitched conventionally with the inner and fly combined, or put up using only the fly and the sewn-in footprint for those fast-and-light freaks. The **Krypton** retails for \$699. For more information, contact **Mont** on (02) 6162 0900.

Summer = sandals

We all love a pair of good sandals for heading out bush, and **Teva** has just released a new model for boys and girls, the **Karnali Wraptor**. The **Wraptor Fit** Technology is said to ensure a stable, secure ride wherever your adventures lead you, while the **Drain Frame** technology allows water to drain through the mid-sole—perfect for wet exploits when avoiding the heat. They also feature a nifty little-toe guard to protect your little piggies from a dreaded toe stubbing. The **Karnalis** retail for \$179.95. Call **True Alliance** on (02) 8306 3352 to find out more.

Stephen Curtain gives Gore-Tex's latest fabric a good workout

When **WL Gore's** new **Pro Shell** landed in my hot little hands for review, I didn't want to hurt the jacket's feelings. So I gave it a shellacking. From teaching paddling on Lake Yurrunga in New South Wales's Kangaroo Valley, walking in

the Canadian Rockies in July, enduring winter's four months of dry powder snow, drenching rain squalls and everything in between, the **Pro Shell** is simply that—professional. **Gore's** latest lightweight, three-layer fabric uses what it calls **Micro Grid Backer Technology**. It's a winner. The fabric is slim enough to shave off the grams noticeably, but not at the cost of abrasion resistance (think sharp ski-edge scuffs and being literally and repeatedly scrunched into the minuscule confines of a rucksack). It handled an intensive workout over a five-month period and still performs (breathes) well. Which is more than can be said for the jacket's weather-beaten owner. The new fabric is available in a range of brands including **Lowe Alpine**, **Berghaus**, **Mountain Hardware** and **Arc'teryx**.

Knick-Knacks

Keeping it clean

Do you have problems with poor personal hygiene in the bush? Do your fellow walkers strategically choose to walk upwind? If you answered yes to either of these questions, the **Sea to Summit Pocket Shower** could be perfect for you. Made from a heat-resistant waterproof fabric, the **Pocket Shower** is a basic and very lightweight (120 gram) dry bag, with a shower-head attachment and six metres of cord so that you can hang it up and give yourself a clean. Who knows, you might even find yourself more popular with the opposite sex. RRP \$39.95. Call **Sea to Summit** on (08) 9221 6617.

Up in the clouds

With their eagle eye for new trends, **Lowepro** has designed a new range of camera bags specifically for digital cameras—apparently they are going to be huge. Called the **Cirrus TLZ** series, they come in three sizes, the 25, 15 and five. These top-loading bags are built to the usual **Lowepro** standards of ruggedness and feature a built-in memory-card pocket, while the brushed-tricot lining protects LCD screens from scratches. The **TLZ 5** is perfect for compact digital, while the **TLZ 15** and 25 are built for SLRs. Call **Maxwell International** on 1300 882 517 to find out more. RRP from \$29–44.

Two left feet?

Map nerds will be celebrating with a strong cup of tea and a Yo-Yo when they get their hands on **Memory Map's** new **Toughprint** waterproof paper. Apparently 'its special coating...absorbs ink from your printer, but not water'. Furthermore, you can 'run it under a tap, drop it in a river, spill your coffee on it, wipe it off and the print will remain unaffected'. Perfect for clumsy people, **Toughprint** retails at \$24.95 for ten sheets of A4. Visit www.memory-map.co.nz

Silence is golden

Especially in a busy camping ground. **Therm-a-Rest** has released a new range of sleeping mats for hunting. They come in some cool camouflage colours, but more importantly they utilise noise-reducing brushed fabrics, perfect for couples who are interested in nocturnal activities apart

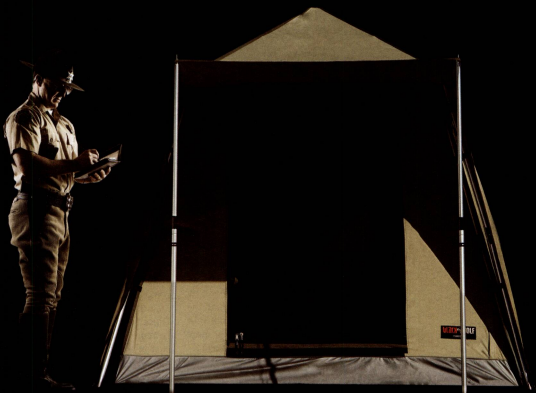
Crossing over

The latest from **Magellan** is the **CrossoverGPS**, which can be used for street, land and sea navigation. It offers voice-prompted street nav-



The three faces of the **Magellan CrossoverGPS**.

igation for cities using **NavigateX** data, you can use **DiscoverAus Streets & Tracks Topo** when out bush, or plot a course with **Magellan Map-send BlueNav XL3** Oceania marine charts (both



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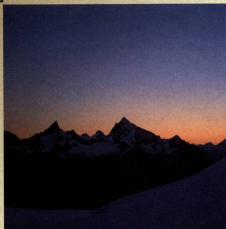
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from killing. Try the Ambush: RRP \$219-\$249. Contact Spelean on 1800 634 853 to find out more.

iPood?

No, we haven't made a spelling error and, no, you can't listen to music with it either: it's Sea to Summit's latest offering for taking a dump. The iPood is the 'strongest, lightweight and compact camp trowel in the world'. Quite a



The iPood comes in a range of colours to please even the fussiest squatter.

claim in the world of shit shovellers. Featuring a hard-anodised blade, collapsible handle and coming in a range of cool colours, the iPood retails for \$19.95. For more information, check out www.youpooded.com, or if that doesn't work, call Sea to Summit. 

Trix

Safeguarding your rucksack

Stephen Bunton on protecting your bag from drug smugglers and baggage handlers

Those of you who own a rucksack will know, that while it has to be tough to survive scrub-bashing, the most damaging threat to a pack is aircraft travel! On a recent trip to South-east Asia I took measures to safeguard my luggage, like many others have done in light of the Schapelle Corby case. Whilst the chance of getting illicit substances stashed in my luggage was incredibly low, using cable ties to secure the straps and zips did have the unexpected bonus of saving my pack from the usual destruction. Each time our packs arrived on the baggage-claim carousel they were in remarkably healthy condition compared to previous experiences.

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

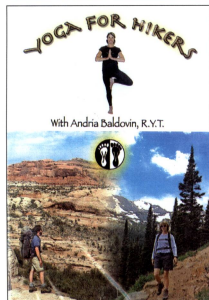
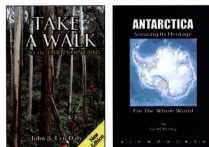
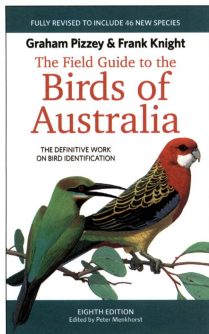
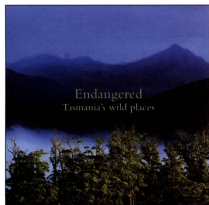
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Endangered

(PENGUIN AUSTRALIA, 2007, RRP \$69.95, www.penguin.com.au).

Rarely are political messages delivered with such passion and beauty. *Endangered: Tasmania's Wild Places* is a collection of photos and writings about the areas in Tasmania outside the World Heritage Area, those threatened or already being destroyed for their resources by logging or mining operations. The places photographed in the book are amazing, every bit as valuable as those within the World Heritage Area, and viewing the images induces a strange mixture of feelings: awe, admiration, anger. Now that the Gunns pulp mill has been given the go-ahead by the Howard Government, despite an assessment process that failed to consider the environmental impact on the forests feeding the mill, logs will probably be sourced from many of the regions featured in this book. The photos themselves are contributed by a range of Tasmanian photographers—including many who regularly contribute to *Wild*—and form one of the most impressive collections this reviewer has seen. Some of the images are sublimely beautiful, set to become iconic images of areas whose destruction seems like madness.

Ross Taylor

Take a Walk in the Blue Mountains

BY JOHN AND LYN DALY (TAKE A WALK PUBLICATIONS, 2007, RRP \$24.95, www.takeawalk.com.au).

This revised edition, unlike the first edition (published in 2000), is not restricted to the Blue Mountains National Park; it now includes walks further afield such as near Jenolan Caves. The layout of the book has been greatly improved with attractive maps and colour photos. Small boxes with interesting snippets relating to local history and wildlife are also welcome additions. The walk descriptions seem quite accurate but in places can be confusing—for example, when one walk description begins part-way through and refers you to another walk in the book for the overlapping section.

David Noble

The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia

BY GRAHAM PIZZEY AND FRANK KNIGHT (HARPER COLLINS, 2007, RRP \$45, WWW.HARPERCOLLINS.COM.AU).

With illustrations of 46 new or recently described species, the eighth edition of Graham Pizey and Frank Knight's Bible is undoubtedly the most definitive field guide available. Those familiar with previous editions will find new and old features in this guide. Clear and accurate descriptions on the left page and Knight's handy work on the right make it easy to identify even the trickiest species. However, this is one of the problems with the guide: it would definitely benefit from key identification features being described or highlighted on the same page as the illustration. The new visual index

across two pages on the inside sleeve is a fantastic addition, making it extremely easy for both beginners and experienced birdwatchers to locate the description and illustration in the text. As usual, the birds of prey section is one of the guide's greatest assets. The two pages of overhead illustrations of every species recorded in Australia make it very easy to distinguish similar birds of prey quickly and easily even when you only get a fleeting glance. This guide is one of the best available and is a 'must have' for everyone from the experienced birdwatcher to the beginner, or anyone who wants to learn more about Australia's wildlife.

Luke Geelen

Antarctica

BY GEOFF MOSLEY (ENVIROBOOK, 2007, RRP \$6 INCLUDING P&P, mosenett@optusnet.com.au).

To an Antarctic photographer this small booklet seems strange at first glance—there aren't any photos. But it is undoubtedly a more important document than many books published on this region.

Geoff Mosley lucidly puts forward a process for getting Antarctica on to the UNESCO World Heritage list and the World Heritage in Danger list. This is a critically important step for the long-term conservation of this remarkable continent. Global warming only adds to the urgency.

Geoff Mosley has worked tirelessly for Antarctic conservation since the 1970s and he provides a concise history of Antarctic protection to date. He sees the best avenue for achieving World Heritage status as being through the auspices of the Antarctic Treaty System. This would require at least one member nation to be actively pursuing it. Australia (along with France) is an obvious candidate, and it is to be hoped that the next federal government will take up this important environmental issue.

This booklet is one of the 'Viewpoints' series on environmental and social issues. The publisher, Pat Thompson, is to be commended for this initiative.

David Neilson

Yoga for Hikers DVD

(BRUSHY MOUNTAIN PUBLISHING, 2006, RRP \$49, www.everestfilms.com.au).

The waterfalls of North Carolina and the deserts of Utah form a spectacular backdrop for this practical approach to yoga in the wilderness. This DVD offers two half-hour routines clearly demonstrated by Andria Baldwin—walker, registered yoga teacher and outdoors publisher—and the voice-over gives helpful and clear instructions.

If you don't mind a few naff graphic effects and low production values, you'll find this DVD provides an excellent guide to relieving your body of the aches and pains most walkers experience out on the track. Your only regret will be that you can't take it with you. 

Bron Willis

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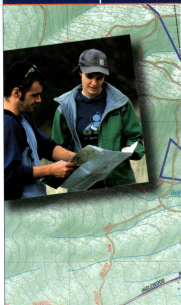
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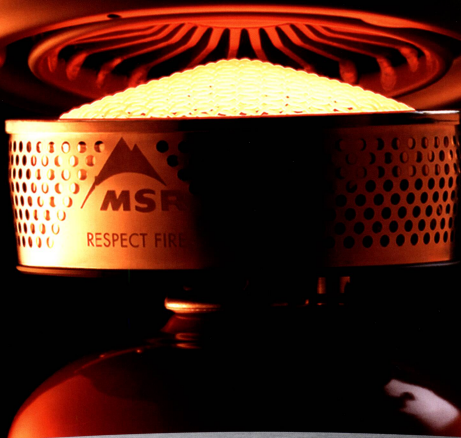
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'Can I change my mind?' Linden Blair has second thoughts mid-air while celebrating his birthday at The Cascades, Kakadu, Northern Territory.
Mark Campagnoli

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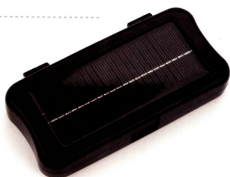
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